MY LIFE OF SONG

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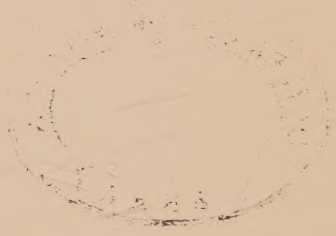
My Life of Song

TETRAZZINI



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Luisa Tetrazzini

MY LIFE OF SONG

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BY

MADAME LUISA TETRAZZINI

With Frontispiece and
Half-tone Plates

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To

All persons, of all races, tongues and
creeds, who have honored
me by listening to my voice and
who, like me, regard music as the
choicest of God's gifts
to mankind—I dedicate this book

LUISA TETRAZZINI

184397

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MY LIFE OF SONG

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CHAPTER I

PATTI'S DEATH AND MY BIRTH

IT was at the conclusion of my recital in Leeds, England, that I first heard the solemn news. A young journalist, hatless and breathless, rushed excitedly into my dressing-room exclaiming:

"Madame Tetrazzini, Patti is dead. What are your impressions on her death?"

All day I had been uneasy. While I was singing to that crowded hall, and even as I responded to the generous applause of the audience, I was conscious of an insistent foreboding of an impending loss. Mothers have spoken to me of similar presentiments experienced about the time that a tragedy has happened to a beloved son or daughter; wives have told me how, during the late war, they knew intuitively of the death of their husbands long before the news arrived from the Department of War.

In times of crisis and death distance seems unable to separate great souls which have a strong bond of sympathy uniting them, and I sometimes wonder if the spirit of Patti, our Queen of Song,

were actually in the hall on that memorable September day of 1919 in Leeds. What else could have accounted for my strange uneasiness?

My thoughts went swiftly back to the time of my London début, when I first met the great Patti, and when she, noble soul, told me that I had won by merit the crown that she had laid aside.

The plaudits of the audience—still echoing through the building as the journalist entered with his tragic news—the journalist himself, my friends and the cold room, all vanished from my perception. All I remember is that I felt cold and unutterably sad, and that I was sobbing. For three days I spent most of my waking hours weeping over the loss of the one who was the world's nightingale and my inspiration, and for weeks I still felt the strain of the shock of Patti's death.

As Garibaldi, Napoleon, Wellington, Nelson or Columbus appeal to ambitious young soldiers and sailors, so Patti has ever been to me—my highest ideal. I used to think of her as a beggar-boy would think of an emperor—a majestic being, more divine than human, so exalted that it was almost sacrilege to speak her name. Apart from the members of my own family, the first name that I heard to remember was the magic name of Patti. Shall I ever forget the first time I heard it or the strange thrill which ran through my young being as the full purport of it was made plain to my eager, childish mind?

It was at our house in Florence. The family were all in the sitting-room. My mother, busy and gentle as always, was sitting on one side of the fire, sewing; opposite her was my father, comfortably reclining in his easy chair. Between them, rolled into a fluffy ball on the rug, was our tortoise-shell cat, quietly purring. The piano, an instrument which through too frequent use was often getting out of tune but was nevertheless an excellent friend to us all, stood in the far corner. My sister Eva, nine years older than myself, was playing something from one of the operas. I, the baby and, I have been told, a general favorite, could not have been more than four or five years old at the time, but I remember toddling over to the piano and saying, "Let baby sing."

"Yes," said my mother, looking up from her sewing, "play for baby."

My sister played slowly, and I sang the notes. The words I did not know, nor do I recollect the air. The notes came to me very readily as we went through the piece. When the air was finished, I asked my sister to play it over once more, and she did. I remember that my mother and my other sister, Elvera, four years older than I, exclaimed, "Bravo, bravo!" as I finished singing. But my father! He called me over to him, took me on his knee, and lovingly caressed my plump young face.

"Baby, I believe that you'll be a Patti some day," he said.

"What's Patti?" I asked, looking mystified.

Then he told me in baby language all about the great Patti. She was, he said, a fine lady, whose name was known all over the earth as having the most wonderful voice, even as Christopher Columbus was known as a wonderful sailor who went out in a little ship and found a new world. He said there were many queens, one in every country, but there was only one Queen of Song. Wherever the kings and queens went great crowds of people came from everywhere to see them, and wherever Patti went there were great crowds who used to stand all day, sometimes in the rain and snow, in the street outside the world's singing-houses, to hear her sing. She had lovely horses, lovely jewels, lovely palaces, and all the world loved and envied her.

When she sang, he said, she made the people forget everything that was horrid and bad, and think only of the sweet and beautiful. He said that everyone who loved singing dreamed of being like Patti. To have a voice like Patti was to walk about with heaven inside. As he spoke my eyes must have opened very wide, as children's eyes do when they hear a wonderful story.

"Den me try to be a Patti, daddy," I exclaimed, using a phrase similar to this if not actually the words. My father hugged me close to his broad chest and, still caressing my hair, again declared his firm belief that one day I should be as famous as his ideal.

During those early years I often had little day-dreams originated by this early scene, and the remembrance of my father's stirring words was the starting-point. I built big air castles for myself. I pictured myself standing in the world's opera houses singing out my soul to vast crowds of happy people, and making them all feel that they were in heaven. And then I would come back to earth as my mother called me to wash the tea-things or to help her in preparing the beds for the family at night.

Like so many other Italian households, ours was a musical home in the fullest sense. My mother had a sweet voice which, whether she was speaking or singing, always delighted my extremely sensitive ear. But she had never sung in public nor undergone a training. She knew all the old Italian lullabies, and used to sing me to sleep with them when I was an infant. My father had a good ear, but no voice.

Even my birth was heralded by music. My parents have often told me of the significant happening a few moments after my advent. It was a festival day in Florence. Our apartment, which was on the ground and first floor of a big block of dwellings, overlooked the highway. My father had just been informed of my arrival when he heard the measured tramp of marching men coming from the street below. He ran to the open window and saw an Italian military band in gay uniform passing the house. The band had just

finished playing a popular march. My father recognized in the commanding officer one of his many military friends, and excitedly shouted down the news that a little girl had just been born to the family of Tetrazzini. The officer waved his baton in congratulation. Then he halted his men, formed them in a circle below our dwelling, and ordered them to play an appropriate little tune. If I could have ordered the arrangements for the beginning of my life, I could not have planned a scene quite so pleasing to myself or my parents as this little unrehearsed event.

Thus my life, which has ever been a life of song, began. Some *prime donne* have first had aspirations for other of life's sweets than those which they subsequently gained in the realms of music. Some have pined to be great painters, some to be great writers, some to be ladies of rank, some to be renowned beauties, some to marry kings. It was not so with me. For me, to sing was to live; not to sing was to die. I used to sing as I awoke in my cot, as my mother dressed me with her patient hands, as I sat at meals, as I ran about our little apartment, as I scrubbed the floors and cleaned the silver, as I walked the Old World streets of my native Florence or wandered down by the river banks and plucked the wild flowers growing there. If I could have done so, I should have written this life in the language of song.

When at my kindergarten school I used to improvise music to the words with which I answered

my teacher's questions—sometimes to her great annoyance and my subsequent physical discomfiture; many times have I had my knuckles rapped for singing when I should have been studying. I have sung my way all through life. When trouble and bereavement have clouded my day, I have stilled my aching heart with song. When I have been ill, I have sung on my sick-bed and partially allayed my physical pains thereby. Nothing but the loss of my voice will ever stop me from singing. I think I shall try to sing to my nurse on my dying bed.

Once I was playing in the field with some of the boys and girls of the neighborhood, and was singing to them as we played. One of the thoughtless lads, for a frolic, caught a grasshopper and put it down my sleeve. I was a temperamental little miss, much afraid of nasty insects, and this boy's sudden caprice gave my whole system a heavy shock. The physical disturbance it caused affected my eyes; a film came over them, and for two months I had to be kept in a dark room. The doctor feared that I should lose my sight. Though I did not see the sun or any light for all this time, I sang my way through the long, weary hours of darkness. The neighbors could hear my voice, and used to speak of "the little blind nightingale." During those days my father, ever kindly and confident of my future, used to spend many hours with me and cheer me with his visions of the golden days that were in store for his little Patti.

It is one of the greatest sorrows of my life that my father did not live to see his unshakable faith justified. Two years before my début he passed away. I was then only fourteen years of age.

There is one little feature of my childhood concerning which members of my family still speak when telling of my love for song. At one period of my life my mother always allotted to me the duty of sweeping and scrubbing all the stairs in our apartment. Sometimes I used to protest, as the task was not the pleasantest of all the household duties. Many other protests of mine to my mother were favorably considered. Not so this one. One day my mother explained the reason why: it was because I had a habit of selecting an act from one of the great operas and singing it through during my work. I used to take the four parts and sing them all—bass, tenor, contralto, and soprano. My mother declared that the time when I was cleaning the stairs was the happiest hour of her day.

Sometimes when singing before very fashionable audiences at Covent Garden, London, or the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, those operas that I used to sing when cleaning the stairs of our Florence home, I feel amused at the contrast, and wonder what my auditors would say if they could have seen me in those happy early days. Sometimes I forget my audiences and am back again in spirit in the old home. I can see my mother busy arranging the meals, the neighbors at their win-

dows, the postman coming down the street, and the purring cat on the rug at the bottom of the steps. It is not until the end of the aria or some movement by the audience recalls me to myself that I realize what is actually happening.

Though I have no great desire to return to my childhood and go through my life again, I can say truthfully that my early days were very happy. I do not look back, as some international *prime donne* have done, to a home of poverty and early struggles to keep the hungry wolf from the door. My father used to supply to the Italian Government the uniforms for the army officers, and so earned a comfortable living for our family. Having a good head for figures, I used to help him with his books, for which he would allow me a tiny sum, about two cents daily, as pin-money. I subsequently found that my love for and ability with figures was very useful in dealing with the business side of my profession. There are hard impresarios who are all too eager to dip deeply into the first scanty earnings of young singers. Others go farther and demand premiums from promising artists for giving them the opportunity of singing in public. In a later chapter I shall devote more space to impresarios and how I fought them.

I am afraid that the assistance I gave my father was not always helpful to his business. The gay uniforms of the Italian officers made the same powerful appeal to my girlish love of color and

smart appearance as they do to most maidens. Many a new uniform subsequently worn by a stern Italian general or smart young subaltern had its first airing around the figure of tomboy Tetrazzini. The cock's plumes in the hats of the *Bersaglieri* were great favorites of mine. In my spare moments I would try on these hats, and oftentimes would be seen walking in the streets of Florence wearing the familiar headdress of this regiment.

I had a glorious afternoon during one of the carnivals. Attired in the gay uniform of the sharpshooters—as the *Bersaglieri* were familiarly termed—with the shimmering dark-green cock's feathers circling down to below my shoulders, I went out to join in the general gaiety of the town. My father, who was with me, far from discouraging me, joined heartily in my frolics. He walked behind while I, assuming the role of a young gallant, saluted some of the maidens of my acquaintance without revealing my identity. I had concocted a little love speech for the benefit of each.

"Oh, fair maiden, thou sweetest girl in Florence, may I offer thee my hand and my heart?" was my opening greeting. After a low bow I would ask the young damsel I was addressing to be allowed to walk with her to tell her more of the love which I had long felt toward her. Some of these girl chums would haughtily toss their heads and walk away. Others gave me a better reception. One of my dearest friends allowed me to walk by her side for a long distance while pour-

ing out my love-sick soul—until she discovered that I was none other than her little friend, Luisa Tetrazzini. I suppose that she was justified in the outburst of indignation which followed her recognition of the imposture. Meanwhile my father, watching the proceedings from behind, was laughing heartily at my spirited fun. On another festival occasion I selected as a companion a very grubby street-boy who made a living by selling pumpkin seeds, and who seemed to be as overwhelmed at the interest that I displayed in him, as were some of my friends.

One of the great days of the year in Florence was that of the masked ball of the carnival season. The first of these that I was allowed to attend saw also my first success in public. I donned the dress of Napoleon—cut-away coat, tight nankeen breeches, light waistcoat, high black boots, and cocked hat. We had a picture of Napoleon at our house, and I stood before this picture to practice the characteristic Napoleonic pose before leaving for the ball. Arrived at the ballroom, I strutted about, one hand thrust over my heart, the other in the classic position at my back; and, like Napoleon on the *Bellerophon,* glowered on each and all. There was general merriment wherever I went, and when the time came to announce the prize-winner I heard with a joyous leap of my heart that little Tetrazzini had been allotted the highest award. Our whole family made merry at my success. We danced on and on until I felt weary.

Then came the feast, with myself in the post of honor and my father sitting at my side to help me in the ceremony. It was then that my merriment received an unpleasant check. The champagne was poured out into a large loving cup, from which, according to custom, the prize-winner had the first long sip. As I was about to take the cup of champagne which was being handed to me, my father's strong hand fell on mine.

"Oh dear, no, little Luisa," said he. "Dear, dear, no. You are much too young to be allowed to touch champagne. It will go to your head, and we shall have to carry our little Tetrazzini home. When you grow up, yes, but not tonight."

I am afraid my eyes filled with tears as I watched my father take the flowing bowl and drink on my behalf, while all the other dancers laughed heartily at the plight of the little prize-winner. Despite this, I soon recovered my self-possession, and it was with my little nose tilted high that I left the ballroom.

This incident reminds me of my last tour of the United States in the winter of 1920-21. After I had acceded to a request of the American Government to sing into the wireless telephone so that the United States sailors could hear me eight hundred miles away, Mr. Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, complimenting me, asked me to name my favorite song. My answer astonished him! For I jocularly named the drunkard's ditty which had become widely popular over there since America went dry. It runs:

"How dry I am,
Nobody knows,
. . . . . "

On that same tour I was the guest of honor at a public function in California. To please me the Governor of the State, who presided, announced that I could hold his office for five whole minutes. "All right," I said, "here is something which will please everybody and make the Governor popular too. Everybody drink what he likes!"

At this there was a roar of laughter from the audience. The Governor, however, shook his head and said I had exceeded his powers.

While playing on the cobbles with which the streets of Florence were paved, I often had an unfortunate tumble, though never a serious accident. Sometimes I would go home to my mother crying over a bruised limb, or a cut knee, or a lost plaything which had been forcefully taken from me by an older and stronger child with whom I had unwisely played.

One of my own very special games was to act as mother to a family of my playmates. My earliest memories of my own mother are that she believed with all her heart that cleanliness came exceeding close to godliness. My first act as mother to my playmates, and some of them were badly in need of my particular brand of mothering, was to give each a good wash. I used to borrow a piece of soap from our family bathroom,

and give the face of each a most sound and thorough scrubbing. Some of my playmates, it is true, did not enjoy me quite so much as their own less strict mothers, though generally speaking all took it as part of a good game. Some returned home to their parents with their faces so spotless that it must have caused surprise in certain homes less Spartan than mine. In justice to myself I think I must say that when it came to another to take the turn of mother, I cheerfully submitted to the same rigors as I had myself exercised.

The skipping rope, hoop, and many of the more sturdy, boys' games all had a great attraction for me as a child. I played a game similar to the English leap-frog, another resembling the American game of baseball.

There is one amusing recollection of those jolly early days which always returns to me when I think of my birthplace. Our residence was right in the heart of the city. Immediately opposite to our sitting-room on the first floor was the studio of a young artist. This young painter should have devoted his talent to comic art, for he occasionally showed us some very clever and exceedingly funny lightning sketches which he made of Eva and myself as he watched us from his vantage point across the narrow street while we played and sang.

When we sang sad songs he would execute a rough though remarkably lifelike drawing of us, but would distort our features so as to indicate the mood of the music. The lower parts of our

faces would be drooping, our eyes would be shown rolling as if in utter dejection, and our heads and hands would conform to the tenor of the rest of the picture. This drawing would be swiftly executed, and hanging out of the window for us to see before we could reach the end of the song we were singing. One of us immediately knew what was happening across the street when the other lost control of her voice and broke into laughter.

"Ah, the student again," we would say, and we would lean out of the window the better to see the result of our artist's latest effort. As we laughed he would withdraw his picture, and return in a few seconds with a new drawing showing us in the very opposite mood: great openings reaching to our ears for our mouths, teeth showing, and cheeks a-wrinkle would denote that we were merry or perhaps that he wanted to hear some happier music. Although he must have made some hundreds of these lightning sketches, he was always careful to add some novelty to make each new caricature different from the others.

One day the young painter called and prayed my mother to allow me to pose as a model for a picture of a child. I was standing by, and immediately urged my mother to agree, which she did without much hesitation. He stated that he had noticed that my hands were very beautiful, and he wished to get them well in the forefront of the picture. So I decided to pose as a little Neapolitan child singing, and eating—*an onion!* I struck a

pose which pleased the critical eye of the artist, and took a big bite of the onion. The picture was soon completed, but I do not think it reached a high standard of art or entered a gallery. The young painter, I believe, is dead, and the picture of little Tetrazzini with her onion is lost to me and to posterity.

CHAPTER II

JOYS AND SORROWS OF SCHOOL

I HAVE frequently been made to suffer because of the envy and jealousy of my fellow-creatures, as have also to confess all who attain to any position of note. Great statesmen, great soldiers, great sailors, great singers, all must pay the price of eminence. Small faults are taken up by the sensational Press and magnified out of all proportion; weaknesses which may not exist are discovered and apostrophized; the finer qualities are forgotten or purposely obscured.

Caruso, John McCormack, and many others whom I could name have all been wantonly and unjustifiably attacked by envious, jealous or merely spiteful persons. It is too much to expect to go through life on the top of any profession without having to fight against malicious onslaughts. Even the great and good General Gordon, with Abraham Lincoln and Garibaldi, did not entirely escape.

Very early in my life I was made to suffer bitterly through the unprincipled act of another. Since then I have undergone other sufferings through the deliberate attacks of my fellow-creatures.

At my first school there was a young girl who came of parents really too poor to adequately maintain her at this establishment. Though my family was not wealthy, I always had sufficient and to spare of the necessaries of life. Seeing that this poor girl was less fortunate, I used to help her as best I could. But this child had less gratitude than some grown-ups. She envied me for my comparative good fortune.

Toward the end of my first year the three lady principals began to miss various small articles from the school, and soon we all had the uncomfortable feeling that there was a thief in our midst. Little pieces of jewelry, food, handkerchiefs and ornaments disappeared. Our teachers grew very annoyed, and threatened severe penalties to anyone who was caught stealing. One day I saw this girl hurriedly leaving the cloak-room with a very guilty face, and I felt sure that she had been searching the pockets of the coats of some of the other girls. When I asked her what she was doing, she passed on without answering. The sequel came the next day when the teacher found a number of things which had recently disappeared—*in my desk.* A great commotion followed. I was publicly accused of having stolen these wretched little ornaments. How they got into my desk I did not know, although I strongly suspected the girl I had previously helped as being responsible. But I had no proof. It was not the annoyance caused by the discovery of these ornaments in my

desk which disturbed me the most. That was bad enough, but my own unfortunate temperament made it worse.

I am of that nature, which I have since found to be not uncommon, which is only too ready to defend another in such an emergency but is helpless in the face of an unexpected charge against oneself. I stood before my principal too overwhelmed at the accusation to make any answer at all. I was literally speechless. Since that day I have stood and sung and spoken to crowds so vast that the very memory of them almost turns me dizzy. I have sung in the open air to nearly 250,000 without feeling at all nervous. Before a great crowd I have never been at a loss for a word; but confronted by a sudden false accusation, I was, and I think I still should be, helpless.

When I, now greatly indignant, returned home to my family I told them what had happened, how horrible they had all been to me at my first school, and asked not to be compelled to go back. My parents were very angry with the school authorities, and, the term being practically at an end, decided that I should not return. I was sent to another establishment, but it was a long time before I felt at ease at school after my first unfortunate experience.

Many years afterward, when I returned—a very successful prima donna—from one of my American tours, I went back to this little school of my early childhood. Of my success in the realm of song all

Florence was now aware, and the principals, when I called on them, were most eager to welcome me and were lavish in their congratulations. They were exceedingly pleased that I had remembered the old school and were so happy to recall that I was once a pupil there.

Then I told them my main reason for calling. It was to tell them as an international prima donna what I had been unable to explain as a shy schoolgirl, that it was not little Tetrazzini who had stolen at the school. I told them of the other girl and the circumstances in which I had encountered her. They were then very profuse in their apologies for the incident, which they said they had forgotten until I recalled it to them. "We thought you were a little thief then. Now you are a prima donna, and have told us you were wronged, of course we believe you," said they, rather naively I thought. As I left I found myself wondering what they would have said if I had not been successful. My photograph now hangs in that school, and the young children are often reminded that the name of Tetrazzini, the prima donna, was once on the register. I do not think, however, that they are told the story of my unfortunate treatment and the reason why I early changed that school for another.

I have no harrowing tale to tell of my music studies, as have some of the great singers and players. There was never a time in my life when the work of preparation seemed so hard that I felt

like abandoning the effort. I did not spend long hours practicing scales and voice production. My *maestri* called me their easiest pupil. "You do not need a *maestro* at all," said one to me when I was at the Conservatoire of Music in my native Florence. "Your voice was born just right."

Certain it is that my actual training was probably the shortest of any prima donna that the world has produced. My sister Eva had to go through four years' hard study and incessant practice at the conservatoire before being appointed to the chief position in the Royal Opera House at Madrid. What it took my sister four laborious years to accomplish, I did in a year without effort. I do not write this in a spirit of boasting; on the contrary, to show that my success seemed to have been mapped out for me by nature. I took to music as a bird takes to air. It was my natural element.

When I first aspired to a life of song my mother pointed to the trying experiences of my sister Eva before she became successful. "The life of the songstress is a hard life," said my mother. "It means so much effort, so much self-sacrifice, so many disappointments, so many tears. Granted a good voice, the difficulty of obtaining a début, of convincing impresarios of your worth, and the moral temptations are almost insurmountable prior to 'arrival.' When you become a good singer you are always living in fear of something affecting

your voice. The rewards are not worth the toil and effort."

If my mother could only then have looked into the future and seen the truth! If she could have foreseen that in fewer than thirty years I should be able to earn with my voice no less than the stupendous sum of five million dollars! But she did not. Neither did I. Yet it has so happened. My voice to date has already earned for me well over that amount.

"Stay and help your father in his business," my mother counselled, "and become a merchant's wife."

I often wonder what would have happened if I had done so. I suppose I should still be living in a little villa in Florence, and be spending my days singing to the birds and listening to the stories told by my successful sister of her visits to the other countries of the world. My eyes would sparkle as she spoke of London and its difficulties in regard to opera, of New York, all skyscrapers and hustle, and of dear old sleepy Madrid.

When my sister practised at home under her *maestro* I would steal into the room and listen to the music. I still remember her trials with *La Gioconda,* and how I had learned it by heart without any special instruction by the time she was ready to sing it from the operatic stage.

When the *maestro* took me to the conservatoire he introduced me as the new musical prodigy. New students were required to take some easy little

piece of music and to sing it to the principal. If the singer gave any indication of promise, she was admitted; if not, she was turned away. When my *maestro* took me first to the conservatoire he told me to bring the *aria* from the prison scene in *Mefistofele,* sung by Margherita. The piece is very difficult, as everyone knows, and I was then only about ten years old. Students are not usually taken at this conservatoire until they are fifteen years of age; but my *maestro* thought, though I was so young, it was wise to introduce me to the musical atmosphere of the college as early as possible, and he asked for an exception to be made in my case.

Compared with the other pupils, I was then a very small, slim figure. The principal looked from my *maestro* to myself in astonishment as I entered his room.

"What have you here?" he queried.

"This is little Tetrazzini, my musical prodigy."

"But she is only an infant."

"Her voice is grown-up, as you shall hear."

"Then let me hear her sing."

I produced my excerpt from *Mefistofele,* and the principal raised his eyebrows.

"But she is not going to sing this?"

My *maestro* said, "Oh, yes, she is."

"But no one sings pieces like this to get admission. They do that when they go away. If she can do this, why does she come here at all—is it to *teach us?*"

I sang, and the principal turned to my *maestro*

with a look of astonishment. "You are right," he said; "she is a musical prodigy."

Instead of taking me to the beginners' class, the principal introduced me to a class of girls who were second-year students, and in one month I had passed ahead of the whole class.

When the time came for the examinations there promised to be some difficulty in obtaining permission for me, through being so young and in my first year, to sit for a second year's examination. But the faculty rose to the occasion and granted me special permission to compete, with the result that I came through an easy first and secured a tremendous advertisement for the institute. It is still truly said of me at the conservatoire that Tetrazzini was unable to pass the first year's examination—for I was never troubled to sit for it.

It was about this time that the Verdi incident happened!

I feel that I must disclose this story to show how very human are all in the musical profession, from the lowest to the highest.

In those days everyone was talking about a great new opera on which that musical genius, Verdi, was working. It was to be one of the most wonderful operas ever composed, so everyone was saying. We used to discuss it at my home; our *maestri* at the conservatoire spoke eagerly of the forthcoming work; indeed, the whole town generally was in a state of excitement over it.

One day the early post brought to my sister a

mysterious scroll which, when it was opened, I was not allowed to peruse.

"It is a secret," said my sister mysteriously, and went to her room to pore over its contents. Naturally, a secret of my sister's set me a-tingling with eagerness to learn it. Later I heard her go to the piano and begin to sing. I entered the room unobserved, looked over her shoulder, and saw what everyone in the musical world was waiting and longing to see—Verdi's new opera, *Otello!*

It was a first copy of a work not yet published. A young man who was a near friend of Eva's was working with the great composer, and had secretly borrowed a copy of the new work to send it to my sister. Though his action was not blameless, his motive, as far as my sister was concerned, was most kind and thoughtful. He argued that by practising on an advance copy of a new opera my sister would become so proficient that when the secret was at last given to the world she would be the person most likely to be given the principal vocal part.

At first my sister had determined to send it back to her thoughtful admirer, as she said it was not quite playing the game either with Verdi or the other opera singers; but the temptation to enjoy just one glimpse of the first page of the score was too strong. The opening bars of the beautiful new work arrested her interest, and she quickly ran through the whole score. The next step was to try a few bars on the piano. Soon she was singing

so gaily the secret *Otello* that she did not notice that I too was listening. It was then too late to keep the secret. So I joined with her in the first rehearsal of the new opera.

That was a great night. We went through the opera several times. My sister Elvera played, and Eva and I sang. It must have been grey morning before we were able to put the new work away and go to bed. Every member of the family was excited, and I, being the baby and the most temperamental, was more excited than all. They told me afterward that I sang Verdi's new *Otello* in my sleep during that short night.

As the new opera was now a family secret, it was most necessary not to disclose its existence to anyone outside our home. As I was leaving for the conservatoire, however, I thought in my girlish mind how delightful it would be to let my *maestro* have just a peep at the work. I wrapped it up carefully, and, carrying it as though it were a piece of delicate china, took it with me to the academy. At the earliest opportunity I had a private word with my *maestro*. Feeling very important and looking very mysterious, I said that I had some new treasure which would surprise him greatly.

"And what is your surprise, my little prodigy?" he asked encouragingly.

"I have brought you Verdi's new opera."

"What!" he exclaimed, and jumped into the air in his excitement. "Let me see it, quick, quick!"

I showed it to him, and watched his eyes bulging.

"Come in here," he said, and leaving the class to look after itself, he led the way to one of the rooms where there was a piano on which we could try it over without being disturbed. He sat at the instrument while I sang. At first he played softly and I sang quietly. As we proceeded we entered into the swing of the glorious work and became less cautious. He played the piano with reckless enjoyment, while I sang to the full volume of my voice.

What was to be expected happened. Suddenly hearing the sound of a heavy man hurrying toward our door, we stopped in alarm.

"Hide it, quick; there's someone coming," ejaculated the *maestro*.

I took the score and quickly thrust it under some cushions. Then we put an old score on the music rack. By this time someone was banging heavily on the class-room door.

"Open the door! Open the door! This minute! I wish to enter."

We looked mutely at each other, for we knew the owner of that voice all too well.

The *maestro* went to the door, unlocked it, and in walked the principal! He was a man of medium height, his hair turning slightly grey. He looked at us both very curiously, and then stalked across to the piano and read the title of the score on the music rack.

"Faust!" he exclaimed. *"Faust!* It was not *Faust* that you were playing." Then he turned to me and said, "Signorina, what were you singing just now?"

My eyes fell. I did not know what to say.

The *maestro* attempted to come to my rescue by saying that I was singing a few excerpts from the old operas.

"Old operas! *Old* operas! Come, come, don't tell me that!" he growled. "I know every *old* opera that is in existence. That glorious music has never been sung before to my knowledge. Those notes, that melody! Have you a new opera here?"

The principal looked from one to the other awaiting an answer. Both of us were fearing what would happen if we disclosed our secret, for the principal was a strict, upright man who, we knew, would countenance nothing that was not absolutely straightforward. Would he discharge the *maestro* and punish me for this escapade? Would he write to Verdi and tell him that his opera had leaked out, and, if he did, what would that stern giant do with the young man who had sent the opera to my sister? Would my sister in some way be injured for her little part? These were some of the questions which I was asking myself during this curious scene in the conservatoire on that memorable morning. But there was not help for it. The secret had emerged from my home; it had to go farther now.

So I told the principal the whole story, expecting him to be righteously indignant. I did not then know what a spell a new opera by a man like Verdi could cast over anyone in the profession.

The expression on the *maestro's* face when I first showed him the new *Otello* was a sight of wonder, amazement and delight that was unforgettable. But the principal! He was almost delirious. Again was enacted the scene in which I had participated once before that morning and, previously, at home. The principal took the new score, glanced through its magic pages, rushed to the door and locked it. Then the three of us went to the piano, and we sang the whole of the new opera through again, the principal loudly expressing his delight at the work as we went along.

"Yes, it's unquestionably Verdi," said the principal, when we had come to the end of the opera; and then he added a sentence which was shortly to be taken up by others and echoed throughout the realm of music. "Verdi, yes, but a new Verdi," he declared. "Our great composer has deserted the old Italian school and is becoming Wagnerian. But what a glorious work, nevertheless. Yes, it's beautiful! Oh, it will be a huge success."

It was long past lunch time before I returned to my home with the precious manuscript, for which, by the way, my sister had been vainly searching during my absence.

For this story to be complete I think I should

have to say that later on, when I met the great Verdi, I told him of the incident and that he enjoyed it immensely; but there was no such desirable sequel, although many years later I was in the presence of the great composer. It was on the shores of Maggiore where I came upon Verdi, with a famous *maestro,* taking the cure. He was then a frail old man. When I saw him I felt a great desire to speak to him and tell the story of the *Otello* manuscript. At that moment the *maestro* saw me, and, excusing himself, came to my side and asked me if I would care to meet the great Verdi. Again on an occasion of the highest importance my temperament prevented me from doing the thing that I most wished to do. I was so overwhelmed at the honor that I missed the opportunity. I sent the *maestro* away with an apology. Immediately he had gone I wanted to go after him and beg to be introduced. It was too late! Not long afterward I read with the deepest regret that our great Verdi was dead.

CHAPTER III

PREPARING FOR MY DÉBUT

THOUGH I was only one year studying music in the conservatoire, it should be understood that most of my life from the time I was able to toddle until my public début as a prima donna, was spent in studying and practicing singing. Even at my first school, where I had the unpleasant experience which I have already described, some of the hours of study were devoted to music. The three old maids—they were sisters—who ran the school had different duties. One acted as manageress, one as professor of literature, and the third as instructress in gymnastics. Though they were sisters, they were not a happy trio. The eldest, who was, of course, the manageress, was greatly disliked by the other two, who sometimes conspired together against her rule. When there was friction among these "goddesses," as might be supposed, the life of the pupils was not so enjoyable as it should have been. Our punishments for real or imaginary offences were more frequent and more severe at these times of disunion. My frequent outbursts of song at irregular moments were never overlooked during these days of tension. I have no children of my own. If I

had I think I should require from the schoolmaster or schoolmistress under whose care I placed them a guarantee that, should they occasionally testify to their joy in life by an outburst of song, they should not be too hastily or too severely checked.

I do not wish it to be understood that my teachers were always harsh and unkind. On the contrary, some were very considerate, appreciative and even indulgent. I have most happy memories of one *maestro* who, after I had finished singing, would nod his head in a grave, wise sort of fashion and say, "Ah, little Tetrazzini, you have something very wonderful in your throat."

"Have I, *maestro?*" I replied on one occasion. "Please tell me what it is that's there."

Then he painted a picture very similar to that which my father had once drawn when speaking of Patti. "You have palaces and castles, horses and coaches, beautiful lands and lovely jewels, a great name and thousands of admirers; you have all there is in the world in that little white throat of yours."

He must have been very hurt with my irreverent reply.

"If I have horses down my throat, *maestro,*" I answered, "suppose you take out two of them and let's go for a glorious gallop across the hills, instead of staying here in this stuffy old school." As I spoke I cheekily opened my mouth.

"Ah, you are very funny, little Tetrazzini," he

replied, "but one day you will know that I speak not in fun but in all seriousness. Then you will remember my words and think kindly of the old *maestro* who will probably be dead and forgotten."

When vast audiences in world-capitals have risen in their seats, waved their hands, and cheered and cheered my singing until I have been almost overwhelmed by the joyous tumult, I have thought of my old *maestro* and his words. "Would that he were here tonight to share with me the success of his old pupil," is the phrase that has often been in my mind and on my lips since those days of my girlhood.

Whatever may be said of me when I am dead, I hope it will never be said that Tetrazzini, when successful, ever displayed a lack of sympathy for those others in her glorious profession to whom the fates have dealt less kindly. I have always realized that I did not make my voice; it was there. And when sometimes my *maestri* used to select me to be an example to those whom they described as their dull pupils, I have invariably felt more sorry for their failures than exultant over my own triumphs. I remember one girl who had been in the institute for six years, whose gifts did not lie in the direction of operatic singing, often causing my *maestro* much annoyance through her inability to produce the notes for which he was asking. After numerous attempts, he turned to me and said, "Tetrazzini, come and show this dull girl how to sing." Feeling very sorry for the dull one, I pur-

posely made one or two mistakes at the start. When I tried again, however, I sang the piece as my *maestro* wished. As a reward my *maestro* gave me one penny, and the dull girl favored me with a scowl which, had she known the truth, she might have reserved for someone else. Such scowls from envious members of the profession, particularly from those of my own sex, have often been directed at me since those early days in Florence.

The hours I spent in the conservatoire were very short. I would rise in the morning at 7.30, and help my mother to cook and prepare the breakfast and to clean the house until eleven o'clock. Housework always fascinated me, and still does. Though I own a palace and a mansion, and when travelling stay in the most luxurious hotels, I often lend a hand to the servants who are scrubbing the floors, sweeping the carpets, and cleaning and tidying generally. I used to climb trees, and loved it. I still climb the trees in my own orchard at Lugano and help to pluck the season's fruit.

At eleven o'clock I used to be at the conservatoire, and would stay and sing there under my *maestro* until about 12.30. Then home to lunch. The afternoon was usually spent with my father, who, besides giving me his books to keep straight, would ask me to do some of the gold embroidery work for the collars of the generals and other great men of the army. From four to five o'clock I would run through the lessons of the morning at home, for there was nothing to do at the conserva-

toire in the afternoon. Every night after supper we had a musical evening. Oh, those jolly musical evenings! Only when the family went out to pay a visit was there no musical evening at our home. Even then we would all take our music to our friends and pass most of the hours singing, dancing and playing.

One of our favorites was Meyerbeer's *L'Africana.* I used to sing both soprano parts, that of Selika, the slave and formerly an African queen, and that of Inez, the daughter of Don Diego. I loved both the music and the character of the slave queen, the woman of the big, generous heart, who, giving up her loved one to Inez, destroys herself by eating of the poisonous tree of beautiful growth. It was in this opera that I made by début, taking the part of Inez, the betrothed of the great Portuguese explorer, Vasco de Gama, the discoverer of Natal. At those merry musical evenings *La Gioconda* was also an opera often sung, while another of our greatest favorites was *The Daughter of the Regiment.* This brilliant little opera is the fifty-fourth work produced by the prolific Donizetti. My father used to tell me that it was at one time very popular in London, when Jenny Lind, then the singing star of the world, played the vivacious *vivandière.* Marie, the soprano, the life of the "21st" of the line, the daughter of a marchioness, was lost in childhood, and found by the "21st" as they marched to war. An old corporal (the bass) takes the infant under his special care, and

she becomes the daughter of the regiment. Tonio, the tenor peasant, falls in love with her, and to be near her joins the "21st." The young couple wish to marry, but complications arise owing to Marie's relatives. But true love wins, for Tonio, as a soldier of Napoleon, has a baton in his modest knapsack. I have sung this merry opera many, many times. I have played it all over Italy, England, Russia, Germany, Austria, North and South America. My way of making a smart little salute, on which the newspapers of all countries have so often commented and at which so many hundreds of thousands of people have laughed, I practised at those musical evenings in my home in Florence. In those days my father used to roll with laughter as he watched me. Once when I was singing at Washington, President Taft—whom I knew well—was in the principal box. When I came on the stage I noticed him immediately. His magnificent, kindly face was beaming a welcome, and so I responded by marching right across the stage until I could almost step into his box. Then I gave him my cheeky little salute. The President broke into a roar of infectious laughter, and all the crowded house joined with him. The incident, small though it may seem when set down in frigid prose, so tickled the imagination of the great assembly that it seemed as though we should not be able to carry on with the opera. The President shook with laughter for some minutes; the people in the other boxes did the same; those in the orchestra roared

and rolled in their seats, while those in the upper parts of the house shouted, "Encore! Encore! Another salute!" It was full fifteen minutes before we were able to proceed with *The Daughter of the Regiment.*

Otello, from the time the unpublished manuscript was brought to the house until I left home, was always popular.

It was during my girlhood that *Lakmé,* an opera in three acts by Delibes, was published. Its first production was in Paris in 1883, and it appeared in London two years afterward. I regard this work as Delibes' best. It has the light touch of the modern French school of opera. It tells of a young British officer who, when in India, enters the sacred grounds of a Brahmin temple, and thereby incurs the death penalty. Meeting Lakmé, the daughter of the high priest, he takes her away to a jungle retreat. While there he hears from afar the trumpet call to return to duty. As he departs Lakmé gathers the flowers of the deadly stramonium tree, kisses her lover, bids him goodbye, and presses the fatal flower to her lips. Lakmé's prayer to Durga and the other Brahmin gods for protection for her English lover, and the famous bell song, were heard almost nightly in our home, and I am still singing arias from his great and ever-popular opera today. It was *Lakmé* that I sang in the Royal Albert Hall, London, on October 10, 1920, at a special concert which it was necessary to give to demonstrate to the

British public that some reports which had been circulated as to my voice were entirely false. The London public, though they had heard me sing *Lakmé,* I thought, until they were weary, gave me their accustomed ecstatic welcome. The hall was packed with nearly 13,000 people. All the boxes save one were filled. The next day the newspapers criticized the owner of this box for not lending it to someone in the large crowds who had been turned away. When we left the hall our car was mobbed by enthusiasts who were shouting to me to return soon and sing them *Lakmé* once again.

I learned how to be a prima donna in the best of all possible schools—the opera house. The family Tetrazzini were typical of the Italians, inasmuch as every member of it, every relative near and distant, was an insatiable lover of opera. My father and brother were great friends of the manager and the conductor at our opera house in Florence, so when the opera season was in full swing the family Tetrazzini would be specially invited, and would go in force, to almost every performance. When I was an infant in arms my parents used to take me with them—but I have no story to tell of having to be suddenly removed from the house because I disturbed the performance. I would lie asleep in my mother's arms, and, to use her own words, "would be as happy as an angel" through the whole performance. If I uttered a sound, as I did later on, it was only to mimic in my baby way a startling note that was

MADAME TETRAZZINI AS "LAKMÉ," IN THE
OPERA OF DELIBES

being sung from the stage, a note which probably first aroused the musical chords in my being. Later on I used to keep awake as the opera proceeded, and I would crow quietly to myself as I sat on my mother's knee, most of the time keeping in perfect harmony with the music.

My *maestro* used to say that I was born in the opera house, which was not strictly correct. It was true, however, that I spent more time in the opera house when I was a child than most singers have done. I have always stated that it was in the opera house that I made my début as a public singer, but when I was in London in October, 1920, an Italian baritone called at my hotel and stated that it was not so, for previous to my début at the Florence Opera House I had sung with him in a tiny hall at a concert held in a village near to my town. He probably is right, but I have now no recollection of the incident. Since then I have sung in villages, but usually in the open air, because of the difficulty of obtaining a public hall of any size.

In the early days of my 'teens I thought I should be a contralto. My voice grew to be very much like that of Madame Clara Butt today, but this phase did not last long, and I found that I was soprano again with a very high register. Since those days I have met many a soprano whose voice first gave promise of being contralto, and tenors who for a little while were baritones.

I did not début in a chorus, as most operatic

singers have done. My first public appearance, save for the forgotten village incident which I have mentioned, was as a prima donna in my own critical, music-loving Florence. The opportunity was both spectacular and unexpected. It was one Sunday evening. Previously the impresario had met my brother in the town and said, "You must come to *L'Africana* tonight. The house will be packed. It will be a record night. We have a great prima donna who has incessantly practised the part of Inez for weeks past. She is now as near to perfection as any soprano you will ever hear." My brother came home very excited, bringing with him tickets for the stalls, one for each member of our family.

"These are the last obtainable," he exclaimed. "There are crowds being sent away from the box-office."

All Sunday we were talking of the coming performance of *L'Africana*. As ever, I was the most interested and excited one of the family. All day I was dreaming of the prima donna whose performance that evening would make her the talk of Florence for weeks to come. How I envied her! I thought of what my brother had said as to her weeks of special preparation for the part. Knowing that I had been singing this opera almost daily ever since I could toddle, I may be excused for feeling that, however much at home this great prima donna would be as Inez, she could not feel and know the part better than I. But she was a

grown-up woman. I was then only a girl with my hair still falling over my shoulders. I was barely sixteen years of age, and, as I have since been told, looked much younger. During the day I expressed to my mother the thoughts and longings which crowded my mind and filled my heart.

"Have patience, child; have patience, little Luisa," said my mother. "Your turn must come soon. Do not be too ambitious. Remember you are but a child."

"Yes, mother, but I can sing, and sing well, so the *maestro* and everybody tell me. If what they say is true, why should I not become a prima donna at once and sing from the operatic stage to our people in Florence?"

"So you shall, Luisa," retorted my mother. "But it is much too early for you to expect to take a star part in grand opera. The day will come, never fear, sooner perhaps than you now think."

There was a tinge of prophecy in those encouraging words of my mother. I did not know it, nor did any other member of my family. Yet that day I was on the verge of my sensational début. Those seemingly long days of waiting and visioning of my youth were at an end. When I recall them I cannot help smiling at my impatience and at the same time marvelling at the rare stroke of good fortune which came to me on that memorable Sunday when I had scarce seen sixteen summers through. There are today some fairly well-known *prime donne* who accidentally discovered that they

had the gift of song only when they were nearing thirty years of age. Yet here was I in my sixteenth year straining at the leash, longing to break away and bound to the forefront of the most difficult stage of the world of art. I am sometimes asked if I do not now think I made my début too soon. My invariable reply is in the negative. I have never had cause to regret taking to the stage so early, for from this time onward my life of song has been my training school. The earlier one starts the better, because one is more impressionable in youth, and the practical experience brings the singer more quickly to maturity. The zenith of her career finds her still fresh, young and mature in art and voice. How often when we hear a great artist have we to deplore that the voice has become old and worn, for the reason that she began too late in life, when the bloom of youth had vanished. I went to the opera house that Sunday night with a muffled sense of being somehow out in the cold. I left the house later on in a state of almost delirious joy. As I entered with my mother, my brother and my sisters, I saw the crowds who were being turned away disappointed from the box-office but I did not feel, as some do in such circumstances and as I may have done on other occasions, a kind of pharisaic satisfaction that my lot was different from that of those others less fortunately placed. I was then only thinking of the prima donna.

I saw those others still less fortunate, who, standing on the opposite pavement, enviously

watched the glittering lights of the Pagliani Theatre and the well-dressed throng pouring inside, and who knew that their pockets were too shallow to permit of their obtaining seats even if there were any on sale. That night, I am afraid, I was also too full of my own aspirations to give them more than a passing thought of pity. Since then—I record it with modesty, for I have always regarded it as a duty—I have as often as possible acted differently when seeing similar sights outside the opera theatres where I have been singing. "You have a good heart, Tetrazzini," is a sentence which, occasionally used by some of my acquaintances, has caused me as much secret pleasure as some of the extravagant outbursts of the audiences whom I have pleased with my songs. It has often happened that when I have arrived at the opera in one of the big world-cities and seen crowds of people in evening dress going away because of the "House Full" sign, I have sent round to the tail of the gallery queue and asked half a dozen of the music lovers among those less fortunately placed, who it was evident stood a poor chance of obtaining admission, if they would honor Tetrazzini by occupying her own private box for the evening's performance. I have watched with quiet enjoyment the curious glances directed toward the occupants of my box by some of the bejeweled ladies in the other boxes and stalls. The rough clothes worn by my selected half-dozen, it is true, are usually out of keeping with the elegant side of

the house, yet to me it is the one touch of human nature which makes the world kin. And these always eager though shabby members of the human race are generally the best listeners and the most ready to appreciate the highest music. On such occasions I feel that I am able to sing better and to be more in sympathy with some of the grand parts which are so plentiful in all the great operas.

Inside the opera house at Florence that night were all who mattered in my home town. All authority, all the *maestri*—and Florence was full of music professors—all the relatives of the artists, impresarios from other towns searching for new talent, the professional men and the business men, the Press and the first-nighters, were there. It was an assembly such as makes a theatre manager feel unusually stern and important. Then it happened! The orchestra had just finished their scraping and tuning-up preliminaries, obviously conscious that they were very important units in the great opening performance, and were all ready to strike forth the opening bars, when a message was whispered into the ear of the conductor. Sitting there in my stall beside my mother, my keen young ears heard something that made my heart leap and then stop. It was to the effect that the prima donna had not arrived. In a flash I was all alert and trembling with excitement. I forgot my youth, my inexperience, my girlish dress, my general unpreparedness. All I could think in that mad rush of eager emotion was, "My chance has

come. There is no one here who can take this part except little Tetrazzini." The conductor was moving about in uncontrollable agitation. He clasped and unclasped his hands despairingly, tore his hair, looked apprehensively from the waiting orchestra to the glittering, expectant house. The manager hurried to him with a note which had just been brought by an express messenger. Eagerly I watched the conductor tear the little envelope, snatch out the enclosure, and read its contents. Then his features assumed an expression of tragic despair. He turned to the house and announced with deepest regret that *L'Africana* could not be given that night. He had just received word from the great prima donna who was to have played the part of Inez that she had suddenly fallen ill and could not leave her house. A murmur of disappointment ran through the theatre. Then I did something the audacity of which causes me to marvel even to this day. The excitement of the moment was so great that I can scarcely remember with accuracy the details of what happened. I have a dim remembrance that my people tried to check my impetuosity and that I refused to be checked. I remember that I jumped to my feet, and then, fearing that I should miss the conductor's eye, leapt on my seat. Standing there, a girlish figure, the cynosure of every eye in that crowded theatre, I addressed the conductor thus: "Don't worry, *maestro*. I know the part thoroughly well. Let me come to the stage. I will sing it." I must

have spoken very loudly, for even in the gallery my words were plainly heard. Immediately I had spoken the house began to buzz with conversation. "Who is she?" asked some. "It's Tetrazzini," exclaimed others. "Yes, let her try," cried still others. And I, quivering with excitement, stood on the cushioned stall unheeding all save the conductor, whose "Yes" or "No" meant everything or nothing, sunshine or storm, joy or sorrow, life or death, to me!

CHAPTER IV

PRIMA DONNA AT SIXTEEN

"WHAT are you saying Tetrazzini? You must be mad!"

The conductor had answered me!

It was the only answer I could have expected. Perhaps in later years I should have accepted such a rebuff as final and have resumed my seat, feeling greatly abashed. Not so on this occasion, for I had not the slightest feeling of that kind at the moment. I only realized that a magnificent opportunity, the chance of a lifetime, was slipping away from me. If I allowed this chance to go by without making a supreme effort to seize it, years might pass before another such opportunity presented itself.

Though my temperament has sometimes failed me in certain critical situations it has never caused me to miss a professional opportunity. There are some *prime donne* who consider it undignified to write an article for the Press or to give an interview to a journalist, but I have always regarded it as a privilege to use the newspapers as a means of speaking to a far bigger audience than can be collected into a public hall. When the opportunity comes to tell of some of the joys and sorrows of

my profession, or to write on a matter of great public interest, I take it, whenever possible. I soon realized how great a power is the Press in making more remunerative the business side of a prima donna's work. To convince an impresario of her ability to sing well is only part of the battle of a prima donna; the general public must know it too. I help the Press whenever I can because almost invariably the Press helps me. Yet though I have allowed few professional opportunities to pass, I have tried to avoid purely selfish actions. All of us are selfish in a greater or lesser degree. I should be much wealthier today if I had lived a life in which my own self-interest was the ruling passion. It often happens that when the opera to be given at any of the opera houses is under discussion some of the artists urge the management to put on productions which give them the best opportunity of distinguishing themselves, and therefore give others less scope to shine. Before I left home my parents urged me on such occasions always to act in the interest of the whole company rather than for the benefit and glorification of myself. I have always remembered their counsel and honestly tried to abide by it when the operas for the season have been under discussion. But when other opportunities for which all who sing are always waiting present themselves, I have never been backward in accepting what the gods have proffered.

"I am not mad," I hurled back to the *maestro*

in the Florence Opera House that night. "I know perfectly well that the part of Inez is very difficult. I also know that I can do it. Do not send all these people away without giving me a chance to show them that what I am telling you is true."

The conductor hesitated. He looked at my small, slim figure half doubtfully, while some of my friends in the audience voiced their own arguments on my behalf.

"The girl is right," shouted one who had heard me sing at the conservatoire. "She has a voice like liquid gold; and she is an actress as well." Some of the others in the balcony added their quota. "Everybody knows Tetrazzini can sing anything. She's the nightingale of Florence," said one. His remark was generally applauded. I think it must have been the inspiration of the audience that finally decided the conductor to take a step which, though it was not quite so far as I had asked him to go, meant everything to me.

"Very well, little Luisa," he said. "You shall have the part." The audience interrupted with a roar of pleasure. I was all for rushing from my seat to the stage when the *maestro* stopped me. "But not tonight," he said. "I cannot take the responsibility of putting anyone on at this house without a rehearsal. No performance is better than a first-night 'failure.' We will postpone the opening of *L'Africana* for a few days, and you shall come tomorrow to the rehearsals."

Later my relatives and friends crowded round

me to praise my daring and to congratulate me on securing an engagement in so unusual a way. All the members of our family hurried home, I singing snatches from *L'Africana* all the way. My heart was bounding with delight. Those rough old cobblestones of Florence, I remember, seemed soft as rose leaves as I danced across them into our cab. I remember how my *maestro* came to the house that night to give me sound advice for the morrow. I remember how that night in my home we played and sang the whole opera through, I, now a real prima donna, singing with intense earnestness every line of my part instead, as formerly, of improvising words to suit my lively spirits.

Rehearsal morning came, and I was up with the lark, singing as blithe as he. We went through the first rehearsal without a hitch. At the end the impresario came up to me and said: "Luisa, there was no need for this wait. I should have asked you on to the stage on Sunday night when you offered to oblige me." I felt greatly complimented over this. We spent but one more day rehearsing, and then came the night of my début. How excited I was all through the day. The hours dragged along. Never was there such a lengthy day in my life. Though I was excited, I was not in the least nervous. It was not until some time afterward, when I had left Florence and had begun to make progress in my profession, that I awoke to the seriousness of operatic singing and began to grow

really afraid of the limelight, of making false moves, of not doing justice to my natural gifts when facing a great crowd of watching, criticizing fellow-creatures.

The début that night in Florence was more of an adventure to me than a solemn performance. As a girl looks forward to her wedding day had I looked forward to my professional début. Few brides and fewer bridegrooms take their wedding day as the most serious day of their lives. So light-hearted and gay was I on my début night that I still marvel at the success which was achieved. From the rise of the curtain to the last drop the performance was acclaimed as a triumph. Of course, everyone in the house by this time knew that sixteen-year-old Tetrazzini was the prima donna of the piece and was making her début. Probably because of my youth I was treated more generously than I should have been if I were ten years older. Prophets may not be honored in their own country, and singers and musicians, probably because there are so many, are not over-esteemed in my native Italy. But Florence was most generous to one of its own people that evening. Since then the enthusiasm of my fellow-townsmen at having produced an international prima donna has not been very marked. On the occasions when I have given a recital there I have always been gladdened by the sight of crowded houses of applauding fellow-citizens. Nevertheless, Florence, like most other Italian towns, has never shown

quite the same measure of appreciation of my singing as London, New York, Petrograd, Sacramento, San Francisco and Buenos Aires have done. The last four have bestowed on me the freedom of the city and other honors. Perhaps it is because Florence has been so intimately associated with such great names as Dante, Michel Angelo, Machiavelli and others famous in the arts that it considers a prima donna to be comparatively unimportant.

That night some of the audience left declaring that a trick had been played upon them. "We do not believe that this was Tetrazzini's first performance," they said. Their sentiments were taken up in some of the newspapers, which said that, despite the fact that Tetrazzini was announced as a débutante, it was too evident, from the way I danced and sang and carried myself in this difficult part, that I was a practised artist and had played before large audiences elsewhere on many occasions. I was too confident, they explained, and I played with too much vigor, too much abandon, was too fearless and too much at home on the stage for the claim to be a débutante to go unchallenged.

I heard afterward that though I had shown no signs of nervousness, all the other members of my family, sitting in their stalls watching me, were beside themselves with fear of a breakdown. My mother could hardly look at me, as she was afraid her gaze might distract me from the part and the

début end in a deplorable failure. When the curtain dropped for the last time, and I had responded to the end of a long series of tumultuous encores, my mother, my brother and sisters hurried round to my room behind the scenes, and there followed a time of congratulation and rejoicing such as is more common in Latin than Anglo-Saxon countries. All my family hugged and kissed me, and hugged and kissed me again. We laughed and cried together, at the same time lamenting that my father, who had always prophesied such great things for me, was not present to join in the family triumph. While our rejoicings proceeded one of the theatre hands came in and stated that a crowd had collected in the street outside with the intention of giving me a royal send-off. During the performance many beautiful bouquets had been thrown on to the stage to me, and these we piled into our carriage.

"Bravo, bravo, little Luisa!" was the crowd's greeting as we left the stage door. The pavements from the theatre to my home were lined, even at that late hour, with large numbers of people, all of whom seemed to be shouting congratulations to me. Some of the occupants of the houses along the carriage-way picked the flowers, damp with the night dew, from their gardens and threw them into our carriage. The scene suggested to me the old triumphal processions of ancient Rome which my history master not so long since used to describe to me in glowing language. Time after time have

I witnessed similar scenes after a performance, but none has impressed me as much as that glorious drive home on the night of my first appearance. There was no false shyness in the way I responded to the congratulations of Florence. I waved my hand and blew kisses in all directions. Some of the younger people ran behind our carriage all the way from the opera house to our home and cheered us as we went indoors.

It was an experience that might easily have turned my head, but my mother, my brother and my sisters were too wise counsellors to allow me to develop in that way. They told me that the début was not the end of the battle; it was but the beginning. The life would be always arduous, and if I were to continue as successfully as I had begun I must work hard, be thoughtful of others, and be sociable always. They told me that my star was unquestionably one of the most lucky in the firmament. Many a great prima donna, they said, had been obliged to pay, herself or through her friends, large sums to obtain the opportunity of a début such as had come my way for nothing. Many worked for years for no salary, while my impresario had already put me on the pay-roll.

The salary which had been offered me and which I had cheerfully accepted seemed to me then to be a big sum—$100 a month. I laugh when I compare it with the amounts that I have since earned, though there are many young women in these post-war days who would call themselves fortunate if they were earning $25 weekly at sixteen.

It was past three the following morning before we finished discussing all the exciting events attending my début. We were all in my bedroom when we finally broke up. My family had gathered at my bedside and had hung the huge bouquets all round the room, which then looked more like a floral exhibition than a maiden's boudoir.

Events moved swiftly after that début in Florence. My impresario decided almost immediately that I was already sufficiently accomplished to appear in the capital. Consequently, he made arrangements for an early début in Rome. I eagerly assented to his proposal, and it was not long afterward that I was journeying to the Rome of which I had heard so much but had so far never seen. I think I was almost as eager to see the sights of the capital as to sing in the principal opera house there. I was taken all round the Eternal City, and shown many of the historic sights which sent my childish mind far back in history, to the time of the Cæsars and the Holy Roman Empire. I looked down on the yellow Tiber with wondering eyes as I thought of the days when Horatius, after keeping the bridge so valiantly, plunged into its deep waters. The Appian Way, along which the triumphant Roman armies marched, and which was once trod by St. Paul the Apostle; the Forum, where Mark Antony inflamed the populace against Brutus after the death of Cæsar; the Colosseum, where the Christians used to be cast alive to the lions—these and many more of the sights of our

beloved capital thrilled my young being during those wonderful early days in Rome.

But there was not too much time to be squandered on seeing the wonders of the town; rehearsals had to be attended daily, and as the Court and all the ladies and gentlemen attached to it, as well as many other great personages, nobles, statesmen and other exalted residents in the capital, were expected to be present, there was every reason why the opera company should be tuned up to the highest possible standard of perfection. I was again to be the prima donna. Yet the great significance of this honor, I am afraid, I did not completely appreciate at the time. I had no doubt as to my ability to carry the rôle through with complete success, but I did not fully apprehend the risk which the impresario was running in placing so young an artist on the stage before the illustrious company that was expected to be present. "She may keep her nerve in her own Florence, but when singing before the Royal Family, the nobles, and all the big men and women of the capital she may lose her head, and the performance end disastrously." This would have been the natural argument of most impresarios who had the interests of their theatre at heart. My impresario, however, was as confident as I was myself.

It had been decided to present the same opera that I had been playing in Florence, *L'Africana,* and I was to continue in the part of Inez. At this time the power behind the throne of the opera

world was Donna Lina Crispi, a lady who was recognized as the leader of Roman society. She made it a practice to attend all rehearsals and to criticise freely. I soon found that any suggestion made by her was always based on a very profound knowledge and was law to us all.

There are two soprano parts in *L'Africana,* Selika and Inez. At the general rehearsal the soprano who sang as Selika went terribly flat during the great sextette scene, dragging all down with her, which left me to support alone the whole fabric of the music. After the unaccompanied portion the orchestra failed to take up the accompaniment again. To the *maestro's* curt demand as to why they had failed to come in, they replied that the singers had fallen nearly a tone and had left them out in the cold. As we were going out I remember asking what would be the consequence if at the performance the next night the singing went flat again. Then someone standing near said: "Signorina Tetrazzini, when they sing so badly at general rehearsal you can always be sure that the opening performance will go magnificently. It has always been so, and it always will be so. I, Donna Lina Crispi, say so." It was the lady autocrat of the opera house who spoke, and so impressed had I been with her knowledge of opera that I felt her prophecy would be fulfilled.

The morning of the opening performance the conductor, the *maestro* Usiglio, gave me some words of counsel. "During the unaccompanied

portion of the great sextette you must keep your eye on me, and I will give you the cues," said he. "When I hear Selika singing flat I will make a sign for you to sing sharp, and this will pull the others up." On reflection it seems that it was asking a great deal of a girl of sixteen to make her début in the capital before the Court, and to adjust her voice so as to assist others who might drop out of tune.

It was then that I began to realize first the real meaning of stage fright. Even supposing I did not go wrong myself before that august assembly, I might yet be dragged down to perdition by the others.

The evening came, and the King and Queen came too. I saw them in the royal box from behind the curtain. I had never seen either of their Majesties before, and the state of my thoughts and feelings at this supreme moment can be easily conjectured. There was so much to think about: the Royal Family, my Rome début, the possibility of the company going flat, of my missing the cue from the conductor, my own nerves breaking down, and perhaps a bad break in my amazing run of good luck. But Donna Lina Crispi was right. We sang our way through *L'Africana* that night in a manner which the Press generally conceded to be almost faultless. Certainly the flattering nature of the language used in describing my work was all that any débutante could desire. At the end of the great unaccompanied sextette there was

a pause, and the audience, realizing that the representation had been flawless from beginning to end, then gave forth such a volley of cheers, accompanied by clapping and waving of hands, as is rarely heard in Rome.

It was during that performance that I accidentally produced a phenomenal note. Instead of finishing up on E, as I intended and as the score ordered, I found myself singing a note a full octave higher, the E alt. The note came as clearly as it did unexpectedly. It was heard with general surprise all over the opera house, and many people who had been turned away, and were listening outside in the hope of hearing some of the higher notes, caught it distinctly and discussed it excitedly. "Wherever did you get that note?" I was asked afterward; to which I was obliged to answer that I did not know. This answer was absolute truth. I had never tried to get it until then, and did not know I was capable of producing it. When it is achieved it is usually thin or cloudy, but that note came forth as full and round and easy as any of the others. Since then I have touched higher notes without difficulty, but I have never forgotten the surprise I felt when I first produced the E alt. It was this note which caused the mild sensation at my last London recital. I had not intended to try so high a flight during my first song, as it is always well to work gradually up to the mountain peaks. It was my intention to warm up the voice with smaller arias, but the programme was not arranged

according to my plan. Before that vast concourse of people I felt slightly nervous at the beginning, and was not fully prepared when the time came to throw out that high note, so I did not attempt it. The audience, however, were very generous with their applause, and it was during the long burst of cheering that I decided to sing the last line over again. I tried the note quietly before I turned to the pianist, and found that it would come quite readily. And so it did. The second outburst of cheering was far greater than the first, and was so genuine that it convinced me that I had done the right thing. Of course, if I had been singing in Italy I should not have attempted to retrieve an unfortunate miss in this way. But I was in England, and had learned from many previous experiences with the English public that they always appreciate an artist who does the unusual—more particularly if she does not happen to be of their own nationality. The newspapers were very nice about Tetrazzini's first public slip and her immediate recovery. It was, in truth, the first time that I had failed to get this note from the time of my Rome début until then, and it has come without an effort since. I am now more careful, however, not to attempt the great flights too soon after I take the stage, and I would counsel anyone who aspires to be an international prima donna always to watch her impresario carefully, resisting resolutely any attempt to insert the most difficult aria into the beginning of the programme.

CHAPTER V

THE QUEEN'S PROPHECY

THE day after my début in Rome there came a delightful surprise. I was informed that the Queen wished to hear me sing at a command performance at the royal palace. My delight at this new honor was somewhat modified when I heard the name of the opera—Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*—from which I was expected to sing. Though I was thoroughly at home in most of the masterpieces, I had never studied the part of Wagner's great heroine. Of course, I had often heard of this tremendous work of Wagner, and was painfully aware that some of the glorious arias written for the famous character Isolde were exceedingly difficult. I had heard that this powerful drama was regarded as the greatest expression in all music of passionate love, and that it had been inspired by a woman who came into Wagner's life when his musical genius had reached full maturity.

As I did not know the part, the Queen, confident of my ability quickly to learn it, sent her own *maestro* to instruct me. I applied myself eagerly to the task of learning what I was then informed was the Queen's favorite opera, and it was not

long before I was taken to the royal palace. There, in the presence of the Royal Family and a large gathering of distinguished persons, I sang some of tragic Isolde's beautiful songs.

During the excitement behind the scenes which followed the close of the performance a royal messenger came to me and stated that Her Majesty the Queen commanded my appearance before her. My heart beat fast on hearing the message, and I was quivering with excitement as I hurried to obey the royal command. My head was already whirling with the sensations of the past few days, and I was now fearful as to what I should say when Her Majesty greeted me. I thought out one or two pleasing phrases, but of course I forgot them when I was in the presence of the Queen. There was one question which Her Majesty put to me which I wished very much that I had been prepared for.

"You sang marvellously well, Signorina Tetrazzini," said the Queen, smiling graciously as I entered and made my curtsy. Then Her Majesty asked me my age. Like all girls in their early 'teens and unlike all women in later life, I was not anxious to be thought very young. Without hesitation I told Her Majesty that I was twenty-three. The Queen seemed surprised at my answer. "But you don't look it," she said; so I suppose I must have looked younger than I thought. After this the Queen made a remark which caused me a thrill of pleasure. "I will make a prophecy about

you," said the Queen. "I prophesy that you will become a very great artist and have a very distinguished career."

Needless to say, the kindly words of my Queen occupied my thoughts for a long time after that first pleasant interview.

My feelings during those days are almost indescribable. When I told my friends what I had said to the Queen as to my age they were very much concerned. They pointed out the folly of adding to my years. "It is not unusual for a woman of twenty-three to appear as a prima donna on the operatic stage, but it is phenomenal for a girl of sixteen to do so," they said. Her Majesty, they argued, instead of thinking less of me because of my youth, would have been the more impressed. I then very much regretted having hidden my true age. As, however, I had been invited to sing at the royal palace, I was able to console myself with the reflection that I could not have done myself very much harm.

My impresario in those days was greatly jubilant over my success and at the money that was rolling into the box-office at the opera house. He raised my salary from $100 a month—the figure for which I had been singing in Florence—to $200 a month, which then seemed to me truly magnificent wages.

I am never weary of reflecting upon those halcyon days of my Rome début. I recall that I used to say to myself: "No matter what anyone says,

I am now a real prima donna, even though I am only a girl. I have appeared before the Royal Family, I have spoken with the Queen and been praised for my singing by the greatest lady in the land, and the Queen says I am going to have a great career." I danced and laughed and sang for joy during those fleeting early days. I revelled in my life. Everyone was kind to me. Everyone seemed anxious to do what he (or she) could to make my every minute as enjoyable as possible. The world I lived in seemed to be an earthly fairy-land. I began to be known in the capital. As I walked about the streets with my friends I would see someone drawing another's attention to me. "There is Signorina Tetrazinni, the youngest prima donna," or "She is our new nightingale. Everybody is going to the opera to hear her," were phrases which I was frequently overhearing in Rome. What young girl is there who would not feel a warm glow of pleasure as she heard people speaking her name and eulogizing her talent as she moved about the capital of her native country! And I must admit that I was very conscious of and gratified at the public interest which my presence in Rome aroused.

I have many other pleasant recollections of the Queen who was so kind to me during those early days in Rome. Only last June I received a letter from Her Majesty—now the Dowager Queen Margherita—inviting me to the royal palace to sing a few songs to her in private. Gladly I obeyed the

summons, and Her Majesty greeted me in her customary gracious way and reminded me of the Rome début. "I am very happy, Signorina Tetrazzini, to see that my prophecy was fulfilled," said Her Majesty. There was an abundance of real feeling in her tones which reminded me of her manner of speaking when, as a girl, I was first called into her presence. Although Queen Margherita's hair has now grown white, she is still a very beautiful woman, and has retained the charm and sweetness of manner for which she has always been famed. After we had spoken about the prophecy, Her Majesty mentioned my sister Eva, and asked when she first became a singer. I told Her Majesty that Eva had been singing a long time before I began. Then the Queen asked me to sing again some of those delightful arias from *Tristan und Isolde* which I sang to her as a girl. Afterward I mentioned that I was about to embark on my farewell tour through America, and the Queen wished me every success. Then she declared that I must not think of finishing my career for many years. "I shall not allow you to do that yet," she said, sweetly imperious; and then added, "You must come and sing to me again." When the Queen, followed by her ladies-in-waiting, swept gracefully out, I blew a kiss in her direction. As I did so the Queen saw me. A smile lighted her sweet face. She bowed and said: "Thank you, Signorina Tetrazzini." Before I left the palace I received a beautiful autographed photograph of Her Maj-

esty, which is now hanging in the music salon at my own palace in Rome.

When my first season in Rome ended I received an invitation to go to Buenos Aires as the prima donna in the chief opera house in Argentina. It was a very tempting offer that was dangled before my eyes. It was made by an impresario who had heard me sing in Rome. I was eager to accept, but my relatives at first raised objection on account of my youth. Finally they changed their attitude and, far from placing obstacles in my way, did all they could to speed me on my journey. A lady chaperon was engaged to accompany me. My mother stood on the quay weeping as I was about to depart. When I saw her cry I wanted to abandon the project, but I felt that it would be unwise to do so. I tried to cheer her by saying that I should now be earning so much money that I should be able to send her large sums to spend on herself. The salary that I had been offered was $1,400 a month, a figure fourteen times as much as I was paid in Florence, seven times as much as I received in Rome, and almost as much as was then paid to an English Cabinet Minister. Most remarkable of all to me was the fact that I, still a girl in my 'teens, was to obtain it through my own efforts. My offer to send my mother some of the golden harvest which was to be gathered from my voice did not cheer her as much as it did me. I remember that my mother, still weeping bitterly, said as we parted: "I shall be here to meet you

when you return at the end of the season," to which I replied, "Oh, yes, dear mother. It will not be long." Neither my mother nor I then foresaw what would happen to me in musical South America, to which I was proceeding. Certainly neither of us thought that it would be four long years before we saw each other again. Yet so it was. When I did return it was to find my mother and relatives so weary with waiting that they had almost abandoned the hope of seeing "Baby Tetrazzini" again. My mother at first was rather cross with me for remaining away so long.

Save for an attack of seasickness, the voyage from Genoa to Buenos Aires was for the main part enjoyable and uneventful. I used to dress as a minstrel and sing Neapolitan airs to entertain the other passengers. I loved these enjoyable impromptu concerts in the saloon and on the deck, and, from what I then heard and still occasionally hear from others who remember the voyage, the other passengers enjoyed them too.

When I was not singing or receiving requests for a song, I used to dance about the decks or embark on a little voyage of discovery on my own account. I explored the old vessel from stem to stern, from quarter-deck to the remote parts of the hold. As it was my first experience of sea life, I was athirst for first-hand knowledge of everything that went on aboard ship. I asked the old salts the names of the various parts of the ship, and they readily enough told me all that I wished to

know. Sometimes they would take from their inexhaustible story-chest some old yarn of the sea, an account of a thrilling shipwreck, the story of a record gale, a tale of a mysterious island or a strange sea monster, and recount it to me in a manner so serious that they might have been telling the Gospel story. I listened to their wonderful and somewhat eerie stories for hours, and sometimes would reconstruct them and be the heroine of them as I slept in my cabin at night while the ship, rolling and heaving, bore me on to the new world almost in the wake of Columbus, to a bigger life, full of promise and perhaps wealth and international fame.

One day as I was pursuing my explorations I found myself in the cook's cabin. There was, as always, a strong smell of burning fat and an abundance of smoke and steam. As I was about to leave I noticed that the smoke seemed to be increasing with alarming rapidity. Then flames began to come from the great whirling smoke-ball, and it was obvious to me that the galley had caught fire. In those days of my 'teens I did not know, as I know now, that the enemy most dreaded by all sailors is fire. A hurricane comes, and the sailor laughs; a wild north-easter only makes him turn up the collar of his oilskins; but the mention of fire will turn the hardiest viking pale. A fire aboard my first ship I regarded as something of a joke. A little extra excitement, I thought, and then we should settle down to the normal life of

song and dance and expectation. But I lost no time in running to the captain's cabin to tell him of what I had seen in the cook's galley. Immediately the captain understood the purport of my words, he dropped everything—he must have been dressing—and put his head out of the cabin, and with a face pale as death exclaimed, "All right! All right! I come quick. I come at once!" His head disappeared for a second, and then he came flying from his cabin and, without waiting to speak to me, doubled across the deck to the cook's galley. A little commotion followed, a number of orders were excitedly given, sand was thrown into the galley, and within a few minutes the danger was over. Afterward I was thanked for having hurried to the captain with the information before the fire had obtained too powerful a hold. It was pointed out that if the alarm had not been given so quickly we might have had to spend many trying hours in open boats, even if nothing worse had befallen us. As for me, I am afraid I treated the whole affair with great levity. The sight of the captain's startled face and the undignified way in which he skipped across the deck was so funny that I could not help laughing heartily as I watched him. Save for this incident the voyage was unexciting.

After I recovered from my early seasickness I enjoyed the novelty of the passage on that small ocean-going steamer, though I have to admit that I am not fond of travelling by sea. For this rea-

son I have never yet accepted an invitation to tour Australia, although many lucrative offers have been made to me to visit that important British continent. Probably I shall never see Australia. The few comforts of that first voyage now seem very insignificant compared with a passage on a modern liner. The *Mauretania,* to my delight, survived the great war, although her sister Cunarder, the *Lusitania,* suffered a terrible fate. I have travelled in the former vessel more often than in any other liner afloat. Whenever I cross the Atlantic I usually occupy a suite fitted with a little kitchenette on which my special dishes are prepared for me; and I take aboard a tiny travelling piano, which I find very useful in keeping my voice in practice, for I am able to spend some hours daily at voice exercise in the welcome seclusion of this private suite.

Though the then President of Argentina (Saenz Pena) was not a frequent attendant at the opera house in Buenos Aires before my arrival, it was, however, a hard and fast rule that the opera which the President loved the best should first be given during each opera season. The President's favorite happened to be *Lucia di Lammermoor,* one of Donizetti's works, in three acts, founded on the novel by Sir Walter Scott. It is a much criticized opera. Nevertheless, its ever fresh and expressive melodies are very pleasing and had a great hold on our grandfathers. From my point of view no opera could have been selected which gave me a

greater opportunity, for Lucia's arias have more possibilities for the prima donna than any of the other operas. For this reason *Lucia di Lammermoor* is now generally known as the prima donna's opera. Like most operas, it ends in tragedy. Lucia, the soprano heroine, kills her false husband, Lord Arthur Buckland, then stabs herself. Her real lover, hearing of the tragedy, then betakes himself to the burying place of his fathers and falls upon his own sword.

I sang the part of Lucia during fifty-four performances. From the first night that I appeared until the last night of the season the opera house was packed at every performance. I was told that not within the memory of anyone in Buenos Aires had there been so successful an opera season. One of the most remarkable features of this season was the presence of the President at the opera every time I appeared. His frequent appearance was the more noteworthy because he had achieved a reputation for deep piety and for constant attendance, both Sundays and week-days, at church. His nightly visits to the opera became the talk of the Press and of the whole town. The writers, particularly, were never tired of commenting upon the spell of my voice under which, they said, he had fallen. When, some time afterward, the President was taken ill and died certain of the more irreverent writers, speaking of how my voice had dragged him from his usual haunts to the

theatre, declared that he had died of his love for Tetrazzini, which I thought was rather unkind.

The President was a short, thick-set gentleman, who was always kindly disposed toward me. I remember that when the time came for me to give my fiftieth performance as Lucia he organized a great fête in my honor. The theatre was festooned with flags, flowers and the gayest bunting. All the important people in the Republic, including three ex-presidents, were present. It was a night of cheering and encores and general gaiety. It would have been morning if I had responded to all the ovations I received. Everyone who could afford it seemed to have brought a large bouquet of beautiful blooms to the theatre that night. At every break in the performance some of these gorgeous flowers would be thrown on to the stage at my feet. When the performance ended the back of the stage and my own dressing-room were piled high with a wealth of floral gifts. During one of the intervals the President, amid general acclamations, presented me with a beautiful diamond star. Later, in my dressing-room, I pinned the star to my dress, and from there went to the President's box to thank him and his wife for the gift. The President invited me inside, and then presented me to the public. Immediately they saw me in the President's box all rose and, waving their hands, shouted, "Viva, Tetrazzini! Viva, President!" It was an unforgettable scene.

From that time onward I could not move about

Buenos Aires without attracting attention from the emotional crowds in the capital. I was earning such a high salary that I had money to spend on horses and carriages, as my old *maestro* had correctly foreshadowed. As I drove through the town or in the park I was invariably recognized, and the people brought little baskets of violets and threw them into the carriage or on to the carriageway. Surely no queen could have enjoyed greater popularity than I during those wonderful early days in South America. When, many years later, I came to London and was lionized in much the same way, I would smile to myself, for London was taking to itself whatever credit there was for discovering in me a new, great, international songstress. Londoners did not know, or had forgotten, the remarkable public demonstrations which had followed my appearance in South America. Some of my friends tell me that I have been discovered many times. They say that Florence, Rome, Buenos Aires, Petrograd, London, Madrid, New York —all claim to have discovered me; and then jokingly they proceed to tell me that India and the Far East may yet claim to have first found in me a prima donna of pre-eminence. Despite the remarks of my friends, I shall always keep green the memory of those enthusiastic music lovers in the Argentine Republic and the generous reception they gave me.

On one occasion after I had been singing the children stopped my carriage, took my horses out, and themselves drew me through the town to my

own residence. On another night some of the excitable young men who had been to the opera insisted on pulling my carriage round the town. It was late, however, and I was very tired, so I asked them if they would do me two favors. "Yes, signorina," they shouted back. "What are they?" I told them that my sister was due to sing at the opera house the next night, and I wanted them to come along and give her the same enthusiastic welcome that they had always given to me. "Yes, yes! We will do it," they answered back. My other request was to be taken straight home, as I was tired out. They turned the carriage round, and, pulling with all their energy, quickly reached my house. They also kept their word in regard to my sister. The next night the house was crowded, and when Eva appeared they accorded her a tumultuous welcome before she sang a note.

My horses were a beautiful pair, coal black, and full of dash and fettle. I used to drive them myself. One day these lively animals bolted and made for a railway crossing at a moment when a train was approaching at full speed. As I saw the train I lost my nerve. Closing my eyes, I said to myself, "I am lost," and waited for the terrific crash which then seemed unavoidable. But it did not come! A gentleman who had observed what was happening dashed up to my frightened animals, grabbed their bridles, and pulled them up just in time to prevent a horrible smash. It was a full week before I recovered from the shock of

those few exciting moments. Of course, all the town soon knew what had happened, for the Press published the story to explain my absence that week from the opera.

CHAPTER VI

I TURN IMPRESARIO

WHILE still in my 'teens I essayed the difficult rôle of diva-impresario. It was during my first memorable season in the beautiful and modern Buenos Aires that the idea was first formed in my mind.

"If all Latin Americans are such lovers of music as the citizens of Buenos Aires, an opera tour through Argentina should prove a very lucrative undertaking." I hazarded this remark to a mixed company of artists, most of them Latin Americans, after one of our performances in Buenos Aires, the applause of the departed audience still echoing through my brain.

To my astonishment the suggestion of an opera tour through Argentina aroused no enthusiasm among other members of my company. "Touring opera companies never pay in South America," declared an experienced baritone, speaking as one with authority. "I know that to my cost. Once I went on tour through the Republic. It was my first and shall be my last experience. Before we had completed a fifth of the tour we were doing so badly that we had to pawn our opera clothes to buy food and beds. We never completed the

tour. The tenor and I walked 150 miles back to Buenos Aires, singing for food in the streets of the cities on the route home."

The gloomy reminiscences of this aged baritone were supported by others present. All had some harrowing tale to tell of unsuccessful tours in which they had participated, and not one of the more experienced singers seemed ready to take jewels from the treasury of grand opera to the country folk of Argentina. The general pessimism, I am afraid, only the more stimulated me to try my luck as the manageress of a touring opera company.

As those who have read so far into these pages have probably divined ere now, I am of a very buoyant nature and am a born optimist as well as a born singer. I could sing before I could speak; in my mind I was a prima donna before I sat for my first music lesson. That others had tried and failed always made me more keen than I should otherwise have been to try myself. "Very well," I said, and I am not now sorry for my sublime confidence. "I am going to take a little company on tour through the cities in the hinterland of this Republic. It may be a failure, but I think it will be a success. Who will come with me?"

"Oh, signorina, if you are coming it is sure to be successful!" exclaimed one of the impulsive instrumentalists, and some of the others agreed; but the older and wiser heads were shaken in dissent. "Buenos Aires is very different from the provincial cities," said a grey-haired 'cellist. "Here come

and live the wealthy persons of the whole State. The capital is cosmopolitan, and our takings are largely drawn from visitors to this town from the United States and other countries. The people of the towns inland have neither money nor time, if indeed the liking, for grand opera."

These or words of similar purport were general at this our impromptu council of war. Nevertheless, I was not to be shaken from my project, and set quietly to work collecting a small company of accomplished singers and instrumentalists, and made ready to start immediately upon the conclusion of our remarkable first season at Buenos Aires.

In view of the eagerness shown by impresarios ever since, I think it very remarkable that, despite my success in the capital, no impresario at that time seemed anxious to take me on tour through South America. My own impresario attempted to dissuade me from my projected tour, and assured me that I should lose in a few weeks all the money I had made since I landed in Argentina. Nevertheless, the company started, I, the youngest of the party, taking full charge, making myself responsible for all receipts and payments. Perhaps it is almost unnecessary to state, in view of what I have already written, that good fortune consistently attended me in South America, the tour of the little company never being for a moment in danger of failing. From the first performance in the first city at which we halted to the last we were a suc-

cess. Not only did we collect sufficient to pay all expenses and all salaries, but there was money left to share as bonus at the end of the run.

After we had demonstrated that it was possible to tour opera and to make the tour show a profit, as was only to be expected there were plenty of impresarios ready and anxious to take the company through the Republic at the end of the next season; and although, in a measure, I enjoyed looking after the business side of grand opera, I was not sorry, because of the many duties I was thereby saved, to hand over the control to a business manager during the succeeding tours.

Many diverting incidents occurred on that first tour in which I was prima donna and impresario in one. I recall an amusing incident which happened when I arrived at Salta, a town in the province of Buenos Aires. The governor (a title which corresponds to a mayor in England or in the United States) prepared to give me a royal welcome. Instead of merely coming to the station, he came by train and met me half-way on my journey, bringing for me a large basket of cerimolla, a very delicious fruit indigenous to this part of the world, a welcome gift on a burning day for a traveller in one of the cramped railway carriages then in general use. Although the governor sent word to the guard to avoid delays, as the Italian nightingale was aboard, we were three hours late in arriving at Salta town.

When we reached Salta the whole community

was awaiting, and gave me a welcome so cordial and demonstrative that it would have satisfied a Chinese empress. "Heavens, whatever is happening?" I exclaimed to the governor, as the train pulled up and I saw the station, the approach and even the telegraph poles alive with people.

"They have all come to welcome you, signorina," answered the governor, smiling grandly. "They all know of Tetrazzini, and so they have come to see what you are like."

My feelings may be imagined. Here was I starting on a little operatic venture for which the experts had prophesied failure; there were to be few or no patrons, and I was to lose in a few weeks all my earnings of the past season; I was to return a sadder and a wiser woman after having experienced the usual fate of the ambitious impresario in the hinterland of Argentina. Yet at the first town of any importance that I visited I was accorded this astonishing reception. I saw that a festive red carpet had been spread across the station platform and laid right out to where the carriages awaited the governor, myself and my company. Flowers were heaped high on the platform, were waved to me from hundreds of outstretched hands, and were spread over the carriage and even on the carriage-way.

As we stepped from the railway car all the church bells of the town began to peal merrily in honor of Tetrazzini. Some high dignitary afterward informed me—somewhat naively, I saw

—that the church authorities had argued that the pealing of the bells would bring the people into the town from the outlying districts, and these would bring money to the town and, incidentally, to the coffers of the church as well.

It was dark as, leaning on the arm of the governor, I was escorted across the platform to the State carriage. The people swarmed thickly about the carriage to see me. One exceptionally daring spirit, before the driver had started, actually leaned in at the open doorway and struck a match in my face. Those were the days before the electric torch became popular. This conduct did not appeal to me at the moment, but the displeased look on my face evidently had no dampening effect upon this remarkable person. "Excuse me, madam, but are you really Tetrazzini?" he asked, speaking quite coolly. I replied that I was. Still staring interestedly into my face, he waited until the vesta had burned itself out; then, with a word of thanks and an apology, he withdrew. The State coach was not too roomy, and when the head and shoulders of my huge visitor were thrust inside there was very little space left.

Many were the delightful experiences of those days in South America. I remember that at Tucuman the governor came to see me and cajolingly announced that near by was a little town he would very much like me to visit. I was willing, as always, to go almost anywhere, and so one day a party of us took the train for the township the

governor had mentioned. After a short journey by rail, I arrived at a station at which was now the inevitable committee of ladies and gentlemen —local notables—waiting to give me an official welcome. Then I first learned of the real object of my visit. It was decidedly novel.

"Signorina," they said, after the welcoming formalities were over, "we have here a cemetery without an enclosure." I remember raising my eyes slightly, as I could not quite appreciate what was coming. They proceeded: "This is not good for the township or our dead, for there is nothing to keep the wild animals out. Consequently the hyenas prowl among the graves and root up the bodies of our dead. Such a terrible state of things should not be, should it, signorina?"

Still slightly mystified, I agreed with them. "Now, we wish to ask you to sing for us, and so to raise the money to build a wall around our dead to keep them inviolate." I am afraid in those early days I was almost tempted to laugh at the unusual nature of the request. I had already sung for many quaint and novel objects, but not before, or since, have I ever been asked to use my voice as a means of preventing hyenas from desecrating the dead. Nevertheless, I recognized the worthy nature of the object and asked if there were a theatre in the town in which I could sing.

"No," they sorrowfully admitted. "We have here only a fine large piazza" (an open square).

"But I can't sing in a piazza," I objected. Then someone made an offer.

"If you will promise to sing we will have a theatre built ready for you to sing in within five days, and we will guarantee that it will be packed to the doors as well."

The proposition seemed impossible, but the speaker was in dead earnest, and I consented. I did not then believe that a theatre could be run up in the time mentioned. But it was! The Yankee hustle for which the United States is famous is not confined to the northern part of the continent. There is a good deal of it among the Latins of Argentina. Nevertheless, the man who actually made himself responsible for the work was a Bostonian! He owned the largest sawmill in the place —there were sawmills everywhere—and gave all the timber, all the nails, and most of the push.

Another resident came forward and offered the courtyard of his own establishment, and this offer was accepted. Others stepped forth and gave voluntary help in constructing the place. I remember going down to the works to watch the novel theatre grow. Such a clattering and banging there was; but the theatre was literally taking shape before my eyes. In less than five days the roof was on, and only the detailed inside work remained to be done. Red, white and blue draperies suddenly made their appearance, and these, tastefully hung inside the great new building, helped to make it very attractive. A stage had been fitted up, and

a "royal" box had been made for the use of the governor. On the fifth day everything was ready for my concert. All the seats had been sold out for days, and since the building had cost nothing, provided I appeared and the people had no occasion to demand their money back, the funds necessary for the new cemetery wall were well secured.

The railroad company, I remember, rose to the occasion. They allotted two special trains to take my company and others from Tucuman to this little township, and each of these trains was loaded to the full. As for the performance, it was a very sombre affair. To mark the serious object of the evening, everyone present was dressed in deep black; all the members of my company, the instrumentalists, and I too, were all in mourning garb.

We certainly were a dismally apparelled assembly. I sang Gounod's *Ave Maria* and Pinsuti's *Libro Sacro,* and then for a novelty my small company and the little orchestra which had come out from Tucuman gave *Lucia di Lammermoor.* Despite the solemn appearance of the auditors and company, we were loudly applauded for our efforts. The expenses of the company and the orchestra I paid out of my own pocket, so that the total takings—5,000 Argentine dollars—were all profit, and were handed over to the cemetery wall fund.

At the close of the performance the governor leaped from his box on to the stage, and then lifted across a little girl carrying a velvet cushion. He

made a brief speech in which he thanked everyone who had taken part in the novel effort, and then declared, amid surprise and tumultuous applause, that the theatre, once built, could not now be demolished. It must ever remain as the home of opera for the little township. Then calling for a bottle of champagne, he broke it at the neck and christened the new wooden five days' old structure the "Theatre Luisa Tetrazzini."

Then he beckoned the little girl to his side and took from the cushion she carried a beautiful gold medal bearing my initials in diamonds and rubies. This he presented to me in the name of the citizens of the town, at which I was greatly delighted. I recall with the deepest regret that this generous gift, with thirteen others received during my South American stay, was later stolen from me. But the "Theatre Luisa Tetrazzini" still stands and flourishes to this day. I would love once more to sing in it, but I am afraid that I shall never again have the courage to risk another long sea voyage to those delightful South American States.

To one South American town (Rosario) I remember I returned no fewer than seven times, and just before the end of my last visit one of those crowds to which I was becoming used collected outside my hotel. I was seated at dinner when the waiter came to tell me that the crowd was outside and calling for me. I left the table and went to the balcony, where I made a little speech promising to return. I thought then I should reappear

in Rosario for certain within a year or two; but the war came, and I have not been back. The crowd was not content with my speech; they insisted upon my singing to them from the balcony. I have always avoided open-air singing, except in circumstances so pressing that it was unwise to refuse. That night I sang Santuzza's aria in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and felt no ill effects of the outdoor effort. Though the crowd seemed to enjoy "Voi lo sapete," I felt that they were disinclined to let me sing any other part than that of Lucia, for which South America seemed to have an insatiable thirst from the day of my first landing.

On my second tour south of the Equator I was prima donna in a company which included the great tenor Tamagno. Now Tamagno, as everyone who knows anything of music is aware, has a voice that can only be described as tremendous. So great and powerful is his fine voice that he can, if he likes, drown all the other singers and almost the orchestra as well. Those who have heard Tamagno will not readily associate him with the rôle of Edgardo in this famous opera. Yet he sang it—to my Lucia. It happened in this way. By some oversight the tenor who should have taken that rôle had not been engaged, or else at the last moment, as tenors sometimes do, had remained behind in Italy. Anyway, the manager (Ferrari), shortly after we arrived, was in a state of despair. "What are we to do for Signorina Tetrazzini's

début?" he demanded, tearing his hair. "She must sing Lucia. Where are we to find a tenor? There is no one in South America who can do this part as I want it done for the signorina's début!"

Then up spake Tamagno.

"I will sing with Lucia," he declared. And sing he did.

"But you will drown me, Tamagno," I remember protesting to him before the performance.

"Oh, dear no, signorina," he answered. "I'll sing quietly, and you sing as loudly as you can. We shall go well together." I was by no means reassured. I knew what would happen. Tamagno would start quietly with the full intention of giving me a chance, and then he would forget himself, his audience and me, and throw the whole force of his mighty lungs into the part.

And this was exactly what did happen. Although when I sing with any other tenor I have no difficulty in making myself heard, I do not think anyone heard me in my duet with the powerful-voiced Tamagno that night. Certainly I could not hear myself. I knew that I was singing correctly, for there was no discord; but all I could hear was the mighty voice of Tamagno, which seemed to be growing steadily in volume with every bar of the music.

Several times I whispered to him, "Do hold in your voice, Tamagno, or no one will ever hear me." He smiled into my face, said, "Oh! do take a good, deep breath," and then continued with all his

former vigor. The stage actually trembled from the vibrations of his enormous voice. But we came through all right, and though I do not know whether the public heard me in that duet, they were very kind in their acknowledgments both to Tamagno and myself.

After the first night the management found a tenor whose voice was more adaptable to mine in this rôle—one of those poor unfortunates (of whom there are so many) who remain in South America, stranded after some failure of an opera company, with no money to take them back to their home in sunny Italy.

I sang in several other operas with Tamagno, among them *Les Huguenots,* Meyerbeer's *The Prophet* (in which I played the part of Bertha and Tamagno his favorite part of John, leader of the Anabaptists), and also in *William Tell,* Rossini's greatest work. In this opera Tamagno was Arnold, the son of Tell's friend, and I was Matilda, Arnold's sweetheart. Other members of that company were the great Sammarco and the tenor Borgatti, who had a great reputation in Italy and also in South America, which demands and gets the best artists in the operatic world.

Of the many other happy experiences that crowd into my mind as I write of those wonderful early days in the Latin republics there comes to me the memory of my first crossing of the Rio into Montevideo. That city, not to be outdone by its neighboring rival, decided to give me a reception some-

thing after the fashion of a scene in mediæval Venice. Small boats gaily decorated with flowers came out to meet my steamer, and when I landed I found that a carriage, richly upholstered with beautiful, sweet-smelling roses, awaited me, while toy bombs, noisy but harmless, heralded my arrival with a series of explosions which created an effect suggestive of artillery.

Later I went up-river to another town, Salto Orientale, which is about four hours' distance from Montevideo. Here there was another inspiring reception. Approaching my hotel I found that it was brilliantly illuminated, and as I drew nearer I discovered that my name, Luisa Tetrazzini, was displayed in large flaming letters, made by Bengal fires, across the front. These fires flashed from red to white, then to green, our Italian colors. There was more to come later, for the municipal band of twenty musicians entered the courtyard of the hotel and serenaded me. By order of the governor all the musicians were dressed in the uniform of our Italian *Bersaglieri* as a special compliment to myself.

When I reflect upon such scenes, which happened not once, but almost daily during my first four years in South America, how can I help feeling proud of those remarkable experiences? Any one of them sometimes seems to me too good to have been real. As I reflect upon them I ask myself sometimes if ever I really were in South America or did I pass through these remarkable

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events in some beautiful dream back in my childish days? Even if it were only to put on record some of the momentous times I experienced in South America I think there is justification for the penning of this, my *Life of Song.*

"But did you never have any dreary times during those early years?" is a question which my friends sometimes ask me; and I have always to answer "No." My friends point out that every great artist at one time was in the rut. They say that at the start things go badly with all. The great ones of the stage have had to walk barefooted through the streets of the city that has afterward come to worship them. They have gone to an impresario, to be met with a cold stare and the dispiriting rejoinder, "Full up." Then they have turned away disconsolately to tread the muddy streets and wonder if they are to be a failure in the end. Everyone knows this is true. All the great artists I have met have had some story to tell me of the times "when they were down and out," when no one wanted them, when no one believed they had genius, when they were climbing or attempting to climb. But with me this was never the case. I began, strangely enough, on the top. From the first public appearance that I made until now I have never had to solicit a position. I have always had a sheaf of letters from impresarios offering to tour me through this lucrative corner or that tempting part of the world. And I receive them still. At the moment I have now many invitations

to return to my beloved South America as well as requests to sing in every other continent.

One aspect of South American life I must confess liked me not. Unlike most women, I have no fear of mice. I can pick up one of these little creatures and hold it in my hand without feeling the slightest repugnance. But there was one animated product of South America which was always giving me a fright—the locust. If one of these insects alighted on my dress I fell into a panic. As the South Americans learned to know me well they came to know of my horror of these insects. One evening I was called back to the stage when there was handed to me over the footlights an enormous locust made of flowers. At sight of this familiar and dreaded shape I could not repress a little shriek. As the public were aware of the joke that was to be played they very naturally fully enjoyed this shriek of mine.

This was by no means the only jocular tribute to my singing that came my way in South America. One evening I was presented with a floral tribute in the shape of a bird's nest by a member of the joke-loving Latin audience. The nest seemed to be lined with red roses, but when I thrust my hand into it I felt a little peck. To my amazement out flew a cardinal, one of the most beautiful of the red birds common in South America. But all the jokes that were played on me were invariably harmless and caused as much amusement to me as to those in whose minds they originated.

CHAPTER VII

PRISON AND SEA ADVENTURES

ONE of the strangest tasks which I was invited to perform during that first year in the Argentine was to call on the President, and, like the suppliant lady who figures prominently in the history of every nation, great or small, beg for the reprieve of one who was languishing in a prison cell. The stirring story of the kind-hearted English Queen Philippa, who, centuries ago, begged for the lives of the seven brave men of conquered Calais, leapt to my mind when the astonishing request was made to me.

It was made by two ladies who at one time were prominent in the social world of Buenos Aires. One was a slight woman with silver hair and a face both sweet and lined through many sorrows. The other was a much younger woman, once a fascinating brunette of the rich Spanish type, and still beautiful, although there were grey threads in her wealth of raven-black hair. They were mother and daughter-in-law, and they had only one point of similarity between them—their eyes, which seemed to be full of anguish and yet patiently expectant of coming relief and future happiness. They told me that they had ventured to call in the

interest of a young man, a lieutenant in the navy, who was the son of the elder woman and the husband of the younger.

I have forgotten all the details of the unfortunate affair for which this young naval officer was then imprisoned. In so far as I can remember, he was an officer on a vessel which had been wrecked; of those aboard only a few, of whom he was one, had been saved. There had been held a court of inquiry; whether it was a fair trial or not I do not know. Some said "yes," some said "no." But the inquiry had been held nine years before, when I was a girl about eight years old, and the unfortunate son and husband of these two women who had come to me had been in prison during all these years. I listened interestedly to their sorrowful story, which made a prompt and powerful appeal to my young and impressionable nature.

"It is a very sad story you have told me," I remember saying. "It is sad for each of you and also for the man you both love. But tell me why you decided to tell it to me."

"We came to ask you to help us," answered the mother, speaking quickly. "We have spent all these nine years trying to get someone interested who is powerful enough to secure his release. We have written to the president many times without avail; we had previously written to his predecessors, but they did nothing; we have written to the Press; they have sometimes taken up the case and demanded another inquiry—but nothing more has

happened. And so we have come to you. We know you can save him by a word."

Then I saw their meaning. "Is it that you want me to go to the president?" I began; and they, in chorus, broke in with:

"Yes, yes, please. If you only would." Then the boy's mother proceeded:

"We have been reading in the Press, signorina, that the president comes to the opera every time that you sing, that he is entranced by your voice, that he throws bouquets and purses of gold on to the stage to you, that he has presented you with a marvellous diamond star, and that he will do anything that pleases you."

"Surely you are overestimating my influence," I remember saying, when the old lady ended her passionate outburst. "The president has been very kind to me, it is true, and has complimented me on my singing. But it is not likely that your president would interfere with the ordinary course of your country's laws to please me, even if he were not offended at an attempt—which must seem a presumption by someone from another part of the world—to interfere with the government of your country."

Though I said this, or words conveying a similar meaning, I had already decided that here was a case after my own heart. Even should the young man prove unworthy, I would make a strenuous effort to get him released for the sake of removing

the anguish from the eyes of those two women who loved him.

"Oh! he will. Yes, we are sure that he will," they declared with emphasis. I shall never forget that pathetic scene in my private room in my house at Buenos Aires: the silver-haired mother, her aging, anguished eyes, her pleading tones, and the Spanish wife approaching middle age, whose rich beauty alone, I then thought as I sat there, would have caused the sternest official of the republic to have considered favorably any earnest appeal made by her. I remember asking where the sailor-officer was confined. They named the prison and invited me to go and see him.

It was not difficult to secure admission to the grim building. Until then I had never seen the interior of a prison-house, though I have since gladly responded to an invitation to sing to convicts in jail. My feelings were a mixture of gloom and curiosity as I passed through the great forbidding gates, across high-walled courtyards, along narrow sunless corridors, and past gangs of hideously garbed convicts—some of whom surveyed me boldly and shamelessly, others furtively, as though their conscience or memories of the past prevented them from looking other human beings straight in the eye. The contrast between my gay world and theirs sent a gust of deep pity for them all through my ever-sensitive being. Then on again, until we stopped at a narrow door heavily bolted on the outside and locked. My warden-guide drew the bolt,

unlocked the door, and I was in the presence of the ex-naval officer, the man who had already served nine years—the best years, perhaps, of his life—in this dreary house of correction and irksome control.

A bowed figure, head resting in his hands, his elbows on his knees, his eyes staring on the floor, met my gaze as I entered. In an instant he was on his feet, looking wonderingly from the warden to me and from me back to the warden. It was quickly explained who I was and why I had come. As he listened a flush of color rushed into his pale face; the hopeless, despairing expression which I had observed in his eyes changed; hope had come back once more. I have often noticed during my life as a prima donna the truth of what the poets and the sages have written in many languages concerning hope. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." I have observed it to be true in men and women of all ages. Sickness or misfortune, war or calamity comes, but humanity, however badly stricken, will to the end see and cherish a gleam of hope in the bitterest hour; the belief that there is a silver lining to every cloud is present if obscured even in the gloomiest pessimist.

When I left the presence of that officer-convict he was already counting himself a free man, was speaking ecstatically of a new life of liberty in a world where there were no prison bars intervening between him and the glorious sunlight. "Oh, to

be free again, Signorina Tetrazzini!" he breathed as he kissed my hand and bade me good-bye.

I heard him uttering thanks and speaking of freedom as the warden locked and bolted his door from the outside world and as we were walking away down the long, semi-dark corridor. As we went I said to myself: "Luisa Tetrazzini, the president says there is no singer in the world like you. I will show him that I can do more than sing: I can plead for the liberty of a human being. If he will not listen to my pleadings I will set them to music and try to secure this man's liberty with the magic key of song."

From the prison I drove straight to the president's official residence and sent in my card. I am afraid I was all aflutter as I did so, and more so when the servant returned almost immediately with the announcement: "The president will see you at once." Before I was shown into the president's room I had prepared a simple little speech which I felt assured I could deliver with very telling effect. I had plenty of confidence in myself and little doubt as to the ultimate success of my mission of mercy; but I was not quite prepared for what was to come. Nor did I expect that it was the president who was to score over me by giving me a pleasant surprise instead of my surprising him with a bold and unusual request.

"I have come to ask a favor——" I began, when the president sternly interrupted me with:

"Please do not ask it, signorina."

This greeting, I confess, took me aback somewhat, but as I was about to begin again the president informed me that there was now no need for me to proffer the request that I had come to him to make.

"But why?"

"Your request is granted before you ask it," answered the president, his assumed sternness giving place to a pleasant smile.

"But you do not know what is my request," I protested. "It may be something which you will not like to agree to."

"Not so, Signorina Tetrazzini," he answered. "For I know both the nature of your request and why you have come to make it."

I must have looked very surprised, for he proceeded: "Do not look so incredulous, signorina. It is not very wonderful that the president should know of what is happening in the establishments and government offices of the country of which he, at the moment, is the head. It was I who signed the warrant giving you admission to the prison, and it is not surprising that I should have been informed of the reason for your visit; and that I should have divined that after you had seen this young officer you should have determined to secure his release. Well, now, it will please you to know that I have done something which will be better even than immediate release—for a release would still carry with it the stigma of the past years. I have ordered a new trial, and I can tell you before

the trial takes place—and it will take place at once—what will be the result. This man will be found innocent and will be released immediately. And though he has suffered a long term of imprisonment, he will come out with his character completely vindicated."

Of course I was greatly elated at the outcome of this little episode, as were the naval officer, his wife and his mother. They all came to see me afterward and, speaking with great emotion, thanked me very sincerely for the interest I had shown. To me it was one of the brightest hours of all those sunny days I spent in the Argentine Republic.

After the affair was over the three, now happy in reunion, left Buenos Aires for a quiet little home in the country where, in those peaceful circumstances, they soon, I hope, recovered from their long and trying ordeal. I had a very pressing invitation to visit them in their rural home, but, unfortunately, the exigencies of my operatic engagements prevented me from accepting.

I had not long been in South America before I discovered that there are many and very serious disadvantages of popularity. Often have I heard men and women, highly placed in the world, lament the trials which attend upon the famous. I have read amusing stories of the artifices adopted by certain eminent persons to avoid the unwelcome attentions of the crowd. I must confess that I have always enjoyed being "lionized" as much as

those who have been the "lionizers." I think that one of my adventures while escaping from unwelcome attentions will compare for novelty and excitement with many of the stories that I have read.

As I have already said, my first engagement in South America was for one opera season only; but after the phenomenal success of the first few weeks I was re-engaged for the next year at $17,500 a month. I fully intended to return home at the end of the second year, but my impresario and all interested in the opera besought me to continue for another year, and I agreed. Again my salary was raised, this time to $22,500 a month.

At the end of the third year the request to remain for yet another season was again preferred and pressed, my impresario using all the influence and arguments he could think of to induce me to accept. I knew that my people at home were very upset at my prolonged absence, and it was only after many refusals that I finally capitulated. Again my salary was raised, this time to $27,500 a month.

After a time my impresario projected a tour for me through Brazil and the other countries in and around the upper part of South America. I was very keen on this tour and readily agreed to it. I had not realized the full extent of the impression that I must have made on the Argentine Republic, but I was about to do so in a way which was more drastic than pleasant.

My impresario had a big rival, a man occupying

a high position in Buenos Aires. The rival impresario determined that I should sing for him that year in Argentina, and he made me a very tempting monetary offer. I believe I was the first prima donna to reject an offer made by him, and when I did this he was very indignant. It was brought to my notice soon afterward that the rival impresario had sworn that, since I had declined his offer in favor of a tour of the neighboring republics, he would prevent me from leaving Argentina.

I laughed lightly when I heard of his threat, but my informant did not join me. "Why are you so grave?" I asked him. "Is Argentina so benighted a country that it is possible for an angry impresario to prevent a popular singer, a native of another country, leaving your capital?"

"It has been done before," said my own impresario, "and it is quite possible to do it again."

"How?"

"He is a man of considerable influence. He could pretend that you have promised to stay here and have you taken off the steamer and brought back to the town."

"But we could fight him in your courts, surely?"

"Oh, yes; but we may lose. In any case we should ruin all our fixtures for this tour, and I should lose a little fortune through broken engagements."

Unfortunately for me, the president who had been so kind to me during the early days of my visit to the Argentine, had died; otherwise I should

have gone to him with another difficult case requiring his official intervention, and one in which I had a more personal interest than the other.

"Cannot I get out of the country in disguise?" I asked after pondering over the dilemma for some minutes.

My impresario's face lightened. "Would you be prepared to do that?" he asked eagerly.

"I'll do anything possible," I remember answering, adding, "I am always game for an adventure."

We then discussed the ways and means. At last we devised a novel scheme which, though it certainly looked feasible, promised to be very much of an adventure; and when it was translated into action, proved to be even more exciting than we had anticipated. The scheme provided that my impresario and I should go aboard a Brazil-bound ship at anchor at Buenos Aires. Once aboard I was to dress in the blue sailor rig of a pilot's boy—I was barely eighteen at the time—and by an arrangement was to leave the ship in the boat with the pilot. After the ship had passed beyond the radius controlled by the Argentine Republic, by which time all danger of interference from officials would be over, the pilot boat would row out to the ship, which would then stop and take me aboard again. It was a pretty scheme, but there were several chances of its going wrong.

The first part of the plan worked well. We—my impresario and I—went aboard, and I quickly donned the garb of a sailor boy; the pilot's cap

effectually hid my long coil of nut-brown hair. So good was my make-up that I strolled about the busy deck, my hands in the side-pockets of my sailor attire, unconcernedly whistling. I saw my impresario, standing at a vantage point of the deck, smiling into his beard and looking approvingly at me from the tail of one eye. Though I appeared to show little concern, I must say that the fresh sea breezes somewhat chilled me as I strutted around. Presently the time came for the pilot to put off. He called sharply to "his boy," and I ran across the deck and down the swaying rope-ladder with an agility that afterward brought me some embarrassing congratulations.

We were well away in a tiny open boat when what my impresario feared happened. Suddenly there was a little commotion ashore, some shouting through megaphones, and then government officials came aboard to inform the captain that Signorina Tetrazzini could not be allowed to leave the country. A vigilant search followed, but I was not to be found. The officials, satisfied that I had missed the boat, went ashore, and the ship proceeded on its way until it had left national bounds.

Meanwhile I was feeling very unhappy. The fresh breeze which I had felt as I swaggered about the ship had increased, and the choppy sea had become almost dangerously rough for the small pilot boat in which we were then dancing on the billows. I am not a great lover of the sea even when travelling in so comfortable a liner as the

Mauretania; and I had only consented to this adventure because I was so eager for a tour in Brazil and because I understood that at this time of the year the sea was generally calm. To make matters worse, the captain of the passenger ship became refractory. When he saw us tossed about on the waves several miles from the coast he suddenly changed his mind and told my horrified impresario that it was too dangerous to risk picking up a boat in that high sea and that he should signal to us to return to the safety of the Argentine shore.

The poorest imagination, I think, could readily grasp the film possibilities of an incident of this unusual nature; so far I have not heard that the "movies" have been engaged to depict a scene exactly corresponding to this true incident from my early life. I often laugh to myself as I picture that serio-comic happening. Back in Buenos Aires was the rival impresario, probably tearing his hair because his myrmidons, engaged to prevent me at all costs from leaving Argentina, had allowed me, in a way then unknown to him, to slip through his illegal grasp. On the vessel, also in a frenzied state, as all impresarios frequently are, was my own impresario, cursing the fate which had upset his astute scheme at the moment of seeming triumph. By him was the sea-captain, imperturbable in face of my impresario's alternate entreaties and threats; and I, a naturally bad sailor, garbed in an ill-fitting sailor-boy's suit, my teeth chatter-

ing with cold, and already experiencing the first unpleasant spasms of seasickness.

My companion rowed his hardest, but we saw that instead of drawing nearer to the vessel a greater distance was separating us at every stroke. And the sea, far from moderating, was growing angrier than ever. At this time I felt seriously alarmed and was almost ready to give the word to put back to Buenos Aires, which was so anxious not to lose me. Some of the white-crested waves were actually breaking over the little boat when we saw at last the steamer was slowing down. I took an oar and gave what help I could to my "adopted father," although I am afraid I was of very little assistance. I was chilled to the bone as I mounted the rope ladder to the deck, where my impresario waited, with hand outstretched to help and to welcome me aboard. Not only my impresario, but all the rest of the passengers, who by this time had learned the true nature of the little drama which was being played, were gathered at the top of the ladder to greet me, which they did with a hearty cheer. It was not long before I had doffed my incongruous clothing and was sitting in the cabin in my ordinary travelling costume.

"But why were you so long in stopping the ship?" I asked my impresario as we congratulated each other on our triumph. Then it was I learned that I had nearly been left behind and that it was only after my impresario had given the captain

a handsome bribe that he had consented to stop the ship. The amount of the bribe was 100,000 francs, and the impresario had written a check for the full figure and handed it to the captain on the spot. He had further given the captain his undertaking to accept full responsibility for any legal trouble which might follow, so that the captain ran no danger of being "carpeted" by his company for a breach of the regulations.

The cautious captain need not have been so fearful of eventualities. There was no unfortunate sequel to the incident. We made a good voyage and I had a sensationally successful tour. When I returned again to Buenos Aires, far from having to face any official hostility, I was greeted with all the old-time cordiality, and the succeeding Buenos Aires season was as successful as those which had preceded it. But it was never again necessary for me to escape from the country in the guise of a pilot's boy; if it had been I should not have adopted this ruse.

Though some may think that my action was lacking in the dignity which should always be maintained by a prima donna, I do not regret the part I played, and I have always felt pleased that even in those early days I was successful in doing what I have occasionally done since, in that I outwitted an unprincipled, over-reaching and powerful impresario.

CHAPTER VIII

A WILD LOVER AND A JEALOUS DIVA

MANY exciting and several really thrilling experiences fell to my lot during subsequent tours through the South American Republics and in Mexico. I was in Rio de Janeiro at the time when one of those revolutions in which South America loves to indulge was in full blast. My first intimation of the revolution was what seemed to me to be a tremendous explosion on a battleship out in the bay; it was the sudden firing of a heavy gun by the revolutionists, who had taken over command of the warship. A terrific crash followed; then I heard the sound of falling masonry, and one part of the hotel in which I was staying tumbled into a heap of broken bricks and splintered wood. The shell had partially wrecked the hotel. Women screamed, men rushed excitedly about the streets around the hotel shouting for or against the revolution, and someone in authority came to me and advised me to join the other citizens, who were hurrying to the shelter afforded by the high hills overlooking the bombarded city.

As we hurried along we head the guns from the city answering the fire of the revolutionaries aboard the Brazilian warship. Though it was not so terrible an ordeal as the hapless Belgians suf-

fered during the initial onslaught of the German army, while it lasted it was a most thrilling and panicky experience. I thought of that scene at Rio de Janeiro when, during the early days of the war, news came of bombardments of Belgian, French and British towns, and my South American experience, brief though it was, helped me to visualize something of what the European war really meant.

The population swarmed out to the shelter of the heights, from which those of us who were not too frightened to watch could view the big-gun duel that was proceeding below. Near by was standing a captain in the Government forces, and he interpreted to me the meaning of certain happenings marking the various stages of the fight. After a time he grew very excited and declared that the city was winning.

"You will be able to sing here again publicly in a day or two," he exclaimed.

But I shook my head. "I cannot sing in a city where your own battleships fire on your own people without warning," I replied. Nor did I sing there again that tour. I left as speedily as possible for Santa Teresa, where I could be out of danger of big guns and contending governmentalists and revolutionaries. I love the Latin South Americans for their many commendable qualities, particularly for their unrestrained passion for song, but their political upheavals are much too violent for my liking.

In Uruguay, another little Republic which I visited about this time, I had an experience of a different nature. The orchestra at the opera house of one of the smaller towns at which I was singing heard of the large sums I was now earning with my voice, and became very envious. They held a little council of war, and then sent to me an intimation that they would not play for me unless I gave them from my own wages the equivalent of their own normal earnings; in other words, they proposed to obtain double pay at my expense. I had no objection to the orchestra getting as much pay as their services could command, but I strongly resented being asked to pay them a bonus for playing in an opera in which I sang, and I told them this. "Very well," they retorted, "we will not play for you, Signorina Tetrazzini. We shall strike."

The evening came for me to make my appearance, and the house was crowded with opera lovers who had read about my singing in Buenos Aires and who had come to see if I were as good as report said. At the time fixed for the start I went before the curtain, addressed the house, and explained the situation. "I am very sorry," I concluded, "but the opera cannot be given. You will all get your money back at the doors."

A murmur of annoyance ran through the packed theatre, and then a voice from the gallery demanded: "Are the artists here?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Are you willing to sing?"

"Oh, yes, of course. It is only the orchestra that has struck."

"Well, then," said my gallery interrogator, "there are a piano, a violin. There must be someone here who can play one of those instruments; and the *maestro* is here: let us get on with the show. Hang the orchestra!"

Cheers from all parts of the house showed that the audience were more ready to listen to a scratch performance than to go away with their seat money, and so we gave the opera as best we could, with only a violin and a piano as accompaniment. Far from the performance being unsatisfactory, we had more applause that night than later on when the orchestra accompanied us. Immediately the opera was over, the municipal band, acting under the special orders of the governor, came to the stage door to play me back to my hotel. The members of this band had arrayed themselves in the unifom of the *Bersaglieri* (one of the Italian regiments) as a special compliment to me, and playing snatches from the opera we had just given as well as Italian martial music, they escorted me through the crowded streets of the town. What with the cheering people in the streets, the music of the bandsmen, their Italian attire, and the clanging of the church bells—which had also been ordered to ring in celebration of my visit—the whole scene grew very impressive, and was made more so by the unfavorable circumstances in which the evening had opened. As was only to be ex-

pected after such a demonstration in the theatre and the town, the orchestra quickly changed their attitude. The next day they sent to me an apology for having tried to wrest an unfair advantage from me, and from then onward they played for me without a murmur every time I appeared.

A romantic incident in which I was the unfortunate heroine occurred in a wild country region in the Argentine about this time. I had accepted an invitation to spend the week-end on a large ranch a long way inland. The proprietor was a very wealthy man, but he, his wife and sons, though kindly people, were rough and uncultured. They were the "new rich" of their day. I did not realize until I met them in their own home how fierce and wild they were, or I should not have accepted the invitation. Their home was magnificently furnished; viewed from the interior, it might have been the town house of a very affluent London merchant. Pile carpets, oil paintings, priceless carved furniture, modern fittings and crowds of servants made this great house in the wilds seem delightfully incongruous.

One evening all the guests save myself had gone to sit or play on the lawn prior to dinner. I had noticed during the afternoon that one of the sons of the house, an exceptionally fierce-looking, powerfully built young giant of about twenty, was shyly attempting to pay me attentions. When the guests went outside he saw me go to my room, and obviously decided that the proposal which he was

contemplating should be made at this seemingly propitious time.

When I, all unsuspecting, came down to the drawing-room, I saw this strange, wild young man standing in a tragic pose in the centre of the room. His head was thrown back and his dark eyes were flashing peculiarly. One hand was held aloft as though he were a statesman about to make a solemn announcement, and the other hand was held behind his back. I stopped suddenly, as I entered, and looked all round the great room in the hope of finding someone else there. But we were alone. Both doors were closed, and the bell was on the other side of the dramatic young giant. What frightened me most was the mysterious little movements that were being made by the arm and hand behind the lad's back.

As I stood there, wondering whether to open the door and rush back to my room or to scream, the fierce youth, in a sepulchral voice, addressed me thus:

"Signorina Tetrazzini, I love you. Will you kiss me?"

It was a situation which required tact. "It is very nice of you, Amato, to want to kiss me," I answered; "but I don't know you yet, and I don't kiss persons I don't know."

This answer of mine was apparently different from what he had expected. He was slow of thought, and it was several seconds before he spoke again. Then he suddenly burst forth with:

"Signorina, you must kiss me now!" With that he whipped from behind his back the ominous something which I had felt rather than seen he had been holding there for some purpose from the time I was due to enter the splendid drawing-room. This something was a long, vicious-looking dagger; its polished blade caught and reflected the burning rays of the red evening sun now streaming through the window. To my horrified eyes it seemed that the blade was dripping blood!

The hilt of the weapon was of silver, beautifully chased. The weapon itself is today one of my most prized souvenirs, and has a place of honor in my home at Lugano. Whenever I look at it I shudder, and then smile at the recollection of the circumstances in which it came into my possession. I see again that picture of the wild-eyed youth standing in the centre of the expensively furnished drawing-room, on the ranch in the wilds of Argentina, with the blood-red rays of the sinking sun catching the polished blade. For fifteen years, in all parts of the world, I used this same dagger when singing "Lucia."

"What have you got there? Put that away at once!" I exclaimed, as the tragic youth produced the dagger. Instead of doing so, he turned the point toward himself and slowly pressed it to his heart. I thought he would stab himself before my eyes, and I turned cold and sick with horror.

"Now will you kiss me, signorina? If you do not, I will plunge this dagger through my heart

as I stand here before you," he said deliberately.

I thought it best to try coaxing. "But why kill yourself, Amato?" I asked. "I shall not be able to kiss you when you are dead. I cannot tell you at once whether I will kiss you or not; I must have a little time to think it over. You see, we Italians never kiss anyone until we know them very, very well indeed. Now, suppose you give me that lovely dagger of yours as a keepsake? Then I will go out on the lawn and think over what you have said, and I will tell you presently if I like you enough to kiss you."

As I spoke the desperate frenzy seemed to disappear from his dark eyes. He lowered the dagger and handed it to me.

"Now let me pass, Amato, please," I said; and he stepped aside.

"And you will come back presently and kiss me?" he urged, as I, greatly relieved, disappeared through the doorway, carrying the captured silver-hilted dagger in my hand.

Outside on the lawn I met the rancher himself, and I thought it wise, in the interests both of myself and his son, that he should know of the little drama which had just been played in his own drawing-room. Of course, I expected the father to be very upset and apologetic at the news that one of his guests had been compelled to go through an experience of this nerve-trying nature. But I reckoned without thinking of the ranchman's social code. Far from being apologetic to me and furious

with his son, he was greatly amused at my story. He thought it an excellent joke, he said. Then he casually told me that I should take no notice of his sons, because they all went slightly mad occasionally.

"But, senor," I remonstrated, "don't you think it rather unwise to invite so many persons to your house if your sons sometimes go mad? There may be a tragedy here some day."

"Oh, don't you worry, signorina," he replied. "My sons are all right. They would not hurt a leaf. Take no notice of them."

The father's careless assurance did not relieve my mind very much, and I resolved as we went in to dinner that I would take care not to be too much alone during my brief stay in that beautiful home of wealthy wild men. It was with a mixture of relief and apprehension that I saw the place of Amato vacant at the dinner-table that evening. My hostess casually remarked on his absence, but my host, smiling cheerfully at me the while, again observed, "Don't worry about Amato. He has probably got one of his mad fits again. He'll be all right in a day or two."

I saw no more of Amato that evening, and at breakfast time I noticed that his place was again empty. Despite his father's careless assurances, I had an uncomfortable feeling that the reckless young savage had committed suicide or done something nearly as desperate. All the morning I expected to hear someone announce that his dead body

had been found on some part of the ranch. I was informed during the day that no one had seen Amato since the previous evening, and that he had not slept in the house at night, and had left no message as to where he had gone. What struck me most was that I was the only person who seemed to be interested in Amato.

"He often disappears in this way," said his mother, when I mentioned the matter to her. During the afternoon the mystery of his disappearance was partially cleared up. As I was walking about the ranch I came to a huge tree which attracted my attention because of some white lettering—showing that the cuts had been newly made—on the bark. There, cut out in huge capitals, were the two names: "Tetrazzini and Amato." The lettering had been executed with considerable skill, and the fact that the names were in one line instead of one above the other suggested that the writer wished it to be understood that we had been destined to walk side by side through life.

But there was something more startling than the way our names were written, for the love-sick youth had cut around them a shape resembling a human heart, and in that part which embraced the name of Amato there was thrust a knife. The workings of this poor lad's mind were plain, and I felt very sorry for him at the time. But where was Amato? Was this his last message to me and his family, and had he really killed himself in some quiet place? During the rest of my stay

nothing more was heard of the youth, but when I returned to Buenos Aires I was informed through my friends of what young Amato had done after he had carved his feelings on the trunk of the tree.

He had gone out on the ranch, where there were some mustangs grazing. These mustangs, as everybody knows, are beautiful and powerful creatures. They seem to be built of springs and are as fast as the wind. Like the lads in the household where I was staying, they were only half tamed, and when frightened they would gallop for hours without halting. Young Amato, it appears, went among his father's mustangs, and, instead of selecting his own habitual mount, chased and caught a young mustang as wild and spirited as himself. The beautiful animal, I was told, had not been broken in, but young Amato was careless of this fact. Immediately he had mounted, the mustang, in terror at the sensation of having something on his back, dashed away across country, over hills, across brooks and on to the plains. What actually happened on that wild ride I do not know. But Amato, famished through days of fasting, returned shortly after I left. He still rode the same mustang that had carried him away; but the beautiful animal was not the wild, frightened steed that had left the ranch—it had come back conquered and docile. Whether Amato, like his steed, had been tamed during his absence, I cannot say. Perhaps he had. Since then I have had no information as to the doings of that remarkable family, yet I shall al-

ways treasure the beautiful dagger as a memento of that rather exciting week-end in the wilds of South America.

Of all my recollections of South America, some grave, but mostly gay, the reflection that I was not subjected to any unpleasantness through jealousies in my own profession seems to me now to be the most pleasant of them all. When I arrived in South America there were no great *prime donne* there whose names had been on the lips of the multitude for many years and who could turn eyes of envy and jealousy in my direction.

"You have come and conquered us all with your voice," declared the President. "There are no others here on your plane." The Press and the public echoed the President's words. I was, however, to have many experiences of what jealousy and spite will do during the next phase of my life of song.

After spending a brief while with my relatives, now moved to Milan, I journeyed to Russia, where I had been offered a lucrative engagement. It was here that I first sang with my good friends Caruso, the great tenor Massini (now sixty years old), and Battistini, the baritone. Of these three famous singers I can only speak words of praise for their great art and of thanks for their kindness to me during my first visit to Russia. Caruso, I remember, told me that I must prepare to come to England, where I should soon attain to international fame.

It was about this time that a then well-known soprano who was singing at Petrograd made a thrust at me which, had it succeeded, would probably have ruined my career as a prima donna. The opera in which we were playing was *Les Huguenots,* a composition which at the time it was written was not very favorably received, but has survived to be regarded as a Meyerbeer masterpiece. The part of Valentine, the heroine, was being sung, not by me, but by the prima donna to whom I have referred, whose name I advisedly suppress. I was engaged to sing only the smaller soprano parts.

The criticisms of the performance published in the Press on the day succeeding the opening were remarkable. Very little was said of the singing of the prima donna, but much was written about my own performance. Most of the critics demanded to hear Tetrazzini in a more important part. Well, the only other important part was that of Valentine, sung by the prima donna. As can readily be understood, this artist did not feel very happy over the Press comments, and, as some other leading ladies have done in similar circumstances, probably determined to "nip the ambitious understudy in the bud." I had been warned before leaving Italy to prepare for the consequences of jealous spite, as the lore of the musical profession, as well as of every other profession, contains numerous warning instances of fading stars showing acute hostility to new and promising luminaries. I know also that there are many great,

lovable souls in all professions, including my own, who, instead of hampering through jealous hate the new stars, unselfishly give them a helping hand. I shall have more to tell of some of these, such as the great Patti, in a future chapter.

When I met the diva the day succeeding the opening I could tell from the glare of her eyes and her frigid, almost contemptuous, demeanor that she was mortally offended with me, though my only offence was that I sang my best. Further, I had just returned from what was a triumphant four years of starring in South America, and was probably entitled to special notice from the Russian Press. But the jealous prima donna could not see someone whom she thought below her securing the praise to which she considered herself entitled. Perhaps she thought I would be asking the management to transpose us. Certain it is that she took a step which she must have bitterly regretted ever afterward, for it probably was the first unexpected drop down the sharp descent which speedily brought her almost to poverty and want.

The opera that was to have been given a few days subsequently was *The Barber of Seville.* As the real prima donna professed to be ailing, I was asked to practice the principal soprano part, which I did; and by the time the house was due to open I felt ready to sustain this rôle with ease. But at the last moment the real prima donna—who was virtually the director of the house at the time—changed her mind. Without giving a satisfactory

reason, she informed the company that, instead of giving *The Barber of Seville,* we were to produce *Rigoletto* that night.

This news was a bombshell to me. It was now so long since I had sung *Rigoletto* that I had forgotten most of this beautiful opera. There was no time to practice it, and the real prima donna still announced herself too ill to take the principal part. The newspaper critics had been invited, and so they were to hear me sing in a principal rôle for which I was totally unprepared. Even when I sang Isolde before my own Queen in Rome, Her Majesty had thoughtfully sent her own *maestro* to coach me and had given me time to learn the part. Here, in Petrograd, it was a different task that was set me. What was the explanation of this sinister situation? There could only be one solution, I told myself: it was a plot by the principal soprano to make me appear to the greatest possible disadvantage before the important personages and the musical critics of the Russian capital. What was more reasonable than the assumption that after this appearance it would be said that I was not a great prima donna, and only capable of filling lesser rôles in grand opera? Briefly I discussed the situation with Battistini and Massini. I told them I was not prepared to take the part in these unexpected circumstances, but they both advised me to make the effort.

"You keep your nerve and you will come through with honors. And we will help you," they declared.

As they spoke I felt my spirits rise, as they have often done in circumstances in which I have felt someone has been treating me or a friend unfairly.

"I will sing *Rigoletto* tonight, and sing it to the satisfaction of all," I said to myself, "or I will never sing again."

The curtain went up on a fashionable and crowded house. The St. Petersburg of those days was very different from the drab, shopless, suffering Petrograd it now is. Jewels were flashing in the boxes and stalls. Tall, bearded Russians, now dead or begging for charity in the streets, sat with their ladies and languidly discussed the opera, none dreaming of the terrible days of terror and hunger ahead. I often think of that imposing scene when I read of the Russia of today, and I shudder as there rushes to my mind some horrible picture of the probable present of this applauding prince who sat there that night, or that beautiful young princess, bright of eye, vivacious in manner, who was by his side.

Battistini took the part of Rigoletto, the baritone; Massini was the tenor, Duke of Mantua; while I was the soprano heroine, Gilda, Rigoletto's daughter. I record it with gratitude that both Massini and Battistini seemed to be as genuinely eager for my success that night as I was.

Particularly in the great soprano aria, "Dearest Name," was this desire for my unqualified success shown by Massini. This aria, which I have sung for recording and which, by the way, is one of the

best sellers of my phonograph records, is supposed to be sung while in an ecstasy of love. In it the Duke's name is sung aloud, the singer declaring that it is forever graven on her heart. While this aria is being sung the Duke should not appear on the stage. So anxious for me, however, was Massini—who knew that if I could produce all the notes of this great aria the success of the rest of the opera was assured—that he decided not to go off the stage. Instead, he secreted himself behind a tree and, thinking to help me, whispered encouragingly as I proceeded with the song. When I realized what Massini was doing for me a wave of gratitude for the veteran tenor swept through me and probably helped me to sing better than was my custom. I have thought since that I was fortunate in singing this aria so well in those circumstances, as an incident of that kind might, on another occasion, have distracted instead of assisted me.

There was an amusing scene at the end of the aria, for Massini, despite his long years of opera singing, for once seemed to have completely forgotten that he was on the stage and not in the stalls. No sooner had I finished than he rushed out from behind his tree-screen shouting, "Bravo, bravo, Tetrazzini!" and so led the audience in the crash of applause which followed. It was just the kind of unrehearsed action that one might have expected of the big-hearted Massini. The audience was swift in recognizing the Duke and the motive which inspired him, and I like to think that much of the

applause which followed was meant as much for the kindly Massini as for myself.

As Massini and Battistini had foreshadowed, the opera went with a great swing. Each of us forgot many of the words, but our improvisations passed unnoticed. The curtain finally fell between us and a house more than satisfied with our performance. As my readers will have imagined, there were two very eager scrutinizings of the Petrograd Press the next morning: the prima donna who had decreed that we were to play *Rigoletto* without a rehearsal, and myself. I was not in her presence when she read the critics' comments, but I can readily imagine what her thoughts were as she did so, for the writers had eulogized my performance in the same lavish language as had done the journalists of South America during the past few years, and almost to the same extent as did the English and New York writers a few years later.

As for that diva, the opera house saw her no more. Without a word of "Good-bye" she packed her boxes and left, giving me a field free from interference and jealousy in high places. And so the experience, which was at first unpleasant, had worked out to my complete satisfaction. The real sufferer—it seemed a case of poetic justice—was the jealous prima donna. So far as I remember she never again appeared as a great diva in any of the world's capitals.

For a time I felt very bitter over her unjustifiable attitude toward me, but when I heard, as I

eventually did, that misfortune had befallen her, I felt truly sorry. It is, I suppose, only human to feel hurt and to be envious of one's supplanter, however innocent that supplanter may be. There is a tale in English history of a king who was greatly hurt and indignant when he saw his eldest son trying on the royal crown—a story which was recalled to my mind by this incident.

After my experience in Petrograd and elsewhere of the jealousies of the profession, I do not think I could ever be guilty of doing other than give a kindly word or a little help to anyone who seems to have a fair chance of filling my place when I retire. I am glad to be able to record that I have since seen the prima donna of whom I have been writing. I was then able to turn the other cheek, and am very pleased that I did so. I was singing in one of the world capitals—I will not mention where, as it is my purpose not to disclose her identity—when I heard that she was in unfavorable circumstances. I wrote to her a pleasant letter, and received a very cordial reply. Later on I sent her seats for my own private box, which she accepted. When I was singing that evening this diva was one of the most enthusiastic of my auditors. Before leaving she kissed her hand to me from the box.

CHAPTER IX

CONQUEST OF MEXICO

DURING all these travels there was ever prominent in my mind, as in the mind of every singer or player, the desire to appear before large audiences in London and New York. I knew that it was only after conquering one or both of these two great cities that I could hope to attain to international fame. Yet I was doing nothing to hasten forward the time for making my bow to either city.

Caruso, as I have mentioned, urged me to go from Russia straight to London, and he confidently predicted a great triumph. Other renowned artists from time to time gave me similar advice and also expressed their confidence in the result. True, some opportunities did present themselves, but the offers were not sufficiently attractive to induce me away from South America, Mexico, Russia, Spain, Germany or Austria, where I was singing for more than a decade before I made my first bow to London.

When I was singing in Mexico, where I spent five seasons, some of the friends I made would ask me about my experiences in London and New York, and when I replied that I had not sung in

either city they would say: "Don't you think you are making a great mistake in coming here before you have been to London? The great Patti did not visit us until long after she had become famous in England and New York."

I understood what they meant, and I knew full well the difference between an English and an American audience—that while a singer coming to America with a great reputation from Britain might be assured of success, the prospects in England of a singer with only a South American reputation were by no means so rosy. England in those days was reputed to be much more critical of singers than the New World, and always sceptical of any of the many "finds" which America at one time was frequently announcing. One of the reasons probably was what England described as "the Barnum method" of booming the singers "discovered" in the New World.

I remember replying to one of my advisers that, despite the English prejudice against American finds, London had accepted Patti—then a girl in her 'teens—immediately upon her arrival from America. What Patti had done I felt, although I did not say so, might be done again. In those days I did not, of course, foresee the amazing scenes which were to follow my début in London or their remarkable resemblance to those aroused by the first visit of the "little lady" who was soon afterward the great Patti.

As I moved about Mexico during those five

seasons I heard many echoes of Patti's visit. It was in Mexico City that I was first told the story of how Patti came to the border of Mexico and then turned back in fright. She was then a girl prodigy touring North America, nightly holding audiences spellbound as, standing on a table, she sang to them with a voice of rare beauty. As she was nearing Mexico she heard stories of brigands robbing concert parties, and little Patti, not yet ten years of age, resolutely declined to be taken into the fearsome country. As I heard moving tale after moving tale of the modern doings in this oft-troubled country, I could not help saying to the Mexican people that I endorsed the action of little Patti, and I added that if I had been a little girl singing my way through North America I should have done the same.

I heard many accounts of the days when Patti —then the most famous singer in the world, and deservedly so—visited Mexico City. It was about the time when I was making my sensational little début in Florence. I heard the Mexicans talking of the magnificence of the railway car in which Patti travelled, which bore her name in huge letters on the outside and which was stared at with wondering eyes by all the country people as the train came through from Texas. In subsequent years I took a leaf from Patti's book in the matter of railway travel, as I found that a sumptuous railway car on which could be cooked the meals I liked best, and on which I could sleep, rehearse

and be free from intrusion, was better far than hotel life with its occasional comforts and frequent discomforts, disturbances and petty annoyances.

When, subsequently, London suggested that in Tetrazzini a new Patti had been found, London probably thought it was saying something new. Yet here in Mexico, several years before London first saw me, I was being generally described as the "Florentine Nightingale" and the "new Patti." The houses attracted by Patti—the goddess before whose shrine I worshipped—were being compared with the houses to which I was now singing in Mexico City. The dresses and the diamonds, the money paid for the boxes, the crowds unable to obtain admission, the number of beautiful women in the stalls, the tempestuous applause, the wonderful gifts of flowers, and the electrical atmosphere of the opera house—all were compared with the scenes of the days of Patti. Yet though the Press and the public were lavish in their praise, though my seasons were called "The New Conquest of Mexico," I realized all the time that there *was* a difference between my appearances in this country and those of Patti. I knew that, despite the pleasure I gave the Mexicans through my singing, they were susceptible—as all small countries are—to the opinion of the great nations, and especially to the authoritative voice of New York or London; and I felt then that, enjoyable though these American tours were to me, I must soon turn my face in the direction of Covent

Garden, and if a suitable opportunity did not present itself I must, like the Roman of old, "find a way to make it."

Meanwhile, from season to season, Mexico was providing me with many interesting experiences as well as with large sums of money. It is not my intention in these reminiscences to devote long descriptions to the brilliant houses that have collected to hear the Tetrazzini voice, or to tedious accounts of the rôles in which I appeared, or to relate in chronological order all my doings in the Mexican Republic. I have never kept a diary, and am unable to remember enough to set down seriatim, even if such would interest my readers, my experiences in this picturesque State. As I have suggested already, my welcome in Mexico was exceptional. It corresponded very much with the generous treatment accorded by the South American Republics.

As in Argentina, so in Mexico, the President was enraptured with my singing and expressed his pleasure in many ways. Mexico's head was, by the way, the famous and capable despot, President Diaz, who with his wife became very frequent visitors at the opera. The President showed me many kindnesses. Whenever I recall him there leaps simultaneously to my mind the remembrance of a very comical figure, a little gnome-like fellow (the President's aide-de-camp), who always followed his chief wherever he went.

This little man was known as the "General," and he used to salute me in a funny little way when-

ever he came near. Every time I saw him make this salute I always felt an almost irresistible desire to laugh. I remember on one occasion when the President and his wife were in the presidential box, and I was on the stage singing, that my eyes suddenly alighted on the "General." He, seeing me regarding him, must needs involuntarily bring his hand to the salute, whereat I had to pause in my aria and laugh. The audience, including the President, though they did not know the reason, joined me in this little episode. After the opera was over I spoke to the President and explained the reason, whereat he exclaimed: "Oh, it was the 'General'! He makes everyone laugh. But they all like him, and he is my mascot. If anything were to happen to him I should be daily expecting a disaster to myself." When I heard the news of the revolution and the President's flight, I recalled this conversation, and I wondered what had happened to the "General" after I left. But I never heard.

I noticed that the President's countenance was very dark, and his features suggested that there was Indian blood in his veins. At that time he was well advanced in years. His wife, on the other hand, was a graceful Frenchwoman, a member of one of the most aristocratic families, and some twenty years the junior of her exalted husband. Her christian name was Carmen. She sent me a lovely photograph of herself, which I still have in my collection of autographed portraits of celeb-

rities. Carmen Diaz used sometimes to come alone to the theatre when the President was very busy. On those occasions she would select the proscenium box, a box which in Latin countries is invariably covered by a grille, so that the occupant can see without being seen. On one occasion I remember, before the curtain rose, the Presidentess was so interested in the head-dress I was wearing—she had seen me through the grille—that she raised the screen and asked me to come over so that she might inspect it more closely.

Mexico City and the Mexicans charmed me. As is well known, the city is nearly eight thousand feet above sea-level, and the atmosphere is very rare and invigorating. Though cold at night, it is very warm during the day, and the sun seems to shine always. I thought the Mexicans peculiar in some ways. They seem to leave their big business to the Americans, having either no initiative or no business acumen. The women, and indeed many of the men, of the city seem to love most the occupation of watching the picturesque life of the streets; and picturesque is the only word in which to describe the moving throng, particularly on Sunday evenings, when everyone in Mexico City seems to be parading the two principal streets of the capital, all intent on seeing and being seen in their invariably striking costumes of divers colors.

Though there is always a palpable undercurrent of deep political feeling—everyone lives in expectation of outbreaks of rioting or civil war or assassi-

nations—the Mexicans show a great zest in life, and the men particularly are very ready to go crazy over exceptional singing or playing. I noticed that the men usually applauded anything and everything I sang; but the Mexican women, although very enthusiastic when I met them off the stage, like my own countrywomen, do not regard it as becoming to applaud in the theatre. I could tell, however, from the applause of some that they had travelled in the United States and had acquired the custom from their Anglo-Saxon sisters.

Upon leaving the theatre I found in many Mexican towns groups of men awaiting me at the stage door. As I appeared they doffed their hats, and some of them removed their coats and, following an old Spanish custom, and one which Sir Walter Raleigh attempted on a notable occasion to introduce into England, cast them on the ground for me to walk on. As I saw this I felt suddenly transported back to the days of old Spain, when men vied with each other in the practices of chivalry and knight-errantry.

An incident which occurred when I was at Puebla was in strong contrast with the foregoing. The opera house—I have sung in some strange edifices, all boldly arrogating to themselves the name of opera house—was a sorry structure. The memory of it haunts me still. Sometimes I dream that I am singing in it, and wake up with a gasp of horror. There had been something very much the matter with the roof just before we arrived, for

when the time came to raise the curtain we found to our disgust, which was vigorously expressed by every member of the ocmpany, that the stage was awash! At first we felt like abandoning the performance, but the manager besought us to appear. There was a full house, he argued, and he would have to hand back all the money, which, he said, was badly needed. The other members of my company wavered and then, they too not relishing the loss of a night's pay, took the manager's side. So I consented.

The water was baled off the stage as quickly as possible, but the roof still dripped so badly that the boards were very wet in places when, a little later, the curtain went up. The opera was my old favorite, *Lucia,* and not wishing to ruin the expensive long-train gown which I wore in this work, I held it up as I sang, at the same time trying to find one or two dry islands in the stage sea. Perhaps it would have been better to have taken the public into our confidence—although, being natives, they ought to have known the state of their theatre—before we started playing, for some of the aristocratic ladies of Puebla, when they saw me holding my skirt aloft, made motions which revealed how deeply I had shocked them.

One lady in particular, seated in a box slightly lower than the stage, where she was unable to observe the reason of my behavior, looked frightfully indignant. She frowned, and then ostentatiously turned herself away from me and faced the audi-

ence, saying in effect, "Just fancy! A prima donna attempting to emulate a high-kicking ballet girl!"

That action of hers and what it implied was too much for me. I decided to help her to clear away a few cobwebs. With my feet fairly soaking and the consciousness that, despite my great efforts, my dress was practically spoiled, I did not feel in the happiest mood, so when a suitable opportunity came I interpolated a few phrases of my own into the libretto of the unfortunate *Lucia*. Advancing gingerly, island by island, across the watery stage, I reached the nearest point to where sat the lady with her back to me. Then I sang, "Madam, you are shocked, very shocked, I know it, yes I do. But do you know, the stage is soaking wet, and our dresses all are spoiling, yet just to please you I am ready, perfectly ready, to let my dress drag through the wet and be completely ruined if you, dear madam, will promise to buy me a lovely new one."

My little impromptu serenade did not have the happy result that should have followed. Some of those near by heard what I sang, and laughed; their laughter further offended the dignity of the great local dame in the box. She still sat with her back to me during the rest of the act, and when that was over she gathered up her wraps and haughtily stalked out—to the quiet amusement of others near by and to myself, who happened to be in a position of observation behind the curtain. On reflection I think the action of the *grande dame* was indefen-

sible, as to pretend to be shocked at a diva who was only trying to protect a new and very beautiful dress was unquestionably an insult. But that was only one of the little discordant notes which are heard in every sphere of life, and I must admit now to many happy smiles when recalling the incident and my rather daring improvisation.

Every artist has many stories to tell of little encounters of this nature during his or her professional life, and many an interesting hour have I spent in the green-room of a theatre listening to one or other of the great singers recounting some such experience. This story I once published in an article entitled "My Conquest of Mexico," which appeared in an American magazine. That magazine was read in the town in which the incident occurred, and it brought me one or two very sympathetic letters from persons who were present on the night in question, each of whom thanked me for appearing in such uninviting circumstances. But there was no letter from the lady whom I had so mortally offended.

Another unpleasant experience occurred when I was in Mexico, the land of sunshine and apparent happiness. There was introduced to me a man who recalled having met me in Buenos Aires. I had almost forgotten him, but later I recollected having met him at some Government function many years before. He was a tall, handsome, magnetic man, middle-aged, very polished, and with plenty of assurance. He said that for a time he had been the

Argentine consul in the town. As he happened to know other members of my company as well as some of my friends, I saw him on a number of occasions. One day he made a proposition to me whereby I was to save money. He said that, as he was still connected with the Government, he could have my earnings transferred from Mexico to Italy, or to whatever place I chose, without my having to lose so much on the exchanges and the postages. I looked at him very sharply as he made this proposal to me, as the unpleasant thought that he was trying to rob me passed through my mind; but I believed differently immediately. His blue eyes looked so honest and innocent that I felt he must be the soul of honor. Nevertheless, I did not agree to his proposal, but told him I was quite satisfied with the way my money was handled at the present, and I saw no reason for changing.

"But you can save money, and it will be safer if you do it through the Government," he urged, rather too eagerly I thought. When he saw I was determined not to entrust him with my money, he dropped the suggestion without showing any sign of annoyance. Later, other members of my company were approached by him in the same way, and as their earnings were not comparable with mine, and they were naturally very anxious to save as much money as possible, they consented and entrusted him with the work of transference. I heard subsequently that their monies were received safely at their destinations and that the ex-consul

had actually justified his claim to be able to save them money. I did not suspect that this was part of his scheme to defraud me.

Then came the time when I wished to have sent to my dressmaker in payment of bills a sum of 27,000 francs (normally $5,000), and being very pressed with other business at the moment, I entrusted the transference to the handsome ex-consul. Time passed, and the receipt and the answer to my letter to the dressmaker had not arrived. I began to grow very nervous. I saw my Adonis-like "benefactor" and asked him if there had been any hitch in the Government office, but he blandly assured me that the money had gone through quite all right, that I should get my acknowledgment in due course, said that I was not to worry, and that he was quite ready to oblige me in a similar way again. But my fears were not so easily allayed. I wrote to my dressmaker and asked her to reply immediately and state whether she had received those 27,000 francs which I had sent her. As for the ex-consul, I told him that I was very agitated at not getting a response to my letter, and that I had no intention at the moment of enlisting his aid in any further financial dealings of mine. With that he left me, and I did not see him again for some time.

During this period I looked eagerly in my mail for a letter from my dressmaker, but still there was no answer. Then one day I happened to be at the consulate when the post arrived, and an official

handed me a letter. It was the one from my dressmaker in answer to my second note. It stated that she had not received the first letter containing the 27,000 francs. This news alarmed me, and I went straight to a solicitor and told him what had happened. The police were called in, and they soon recognized in the ex-consul a man who was an associate of a very well-known gang of expert criminals. They also discovered that for a time, while he was still hoping to be entrusted with some more of my money, he had made it a daily practice to call for my foreign mail so as to prevent my hearing from my dressmaker. The police were very soon on his track, and not long afterward he was arrested. They found him in a very fashionable restaurant entertaining a well-dressed woman in lavish fashion. They had ordered the most expensive viands procurable and a plentiful supply of the best champagne—*all at my expense!*

In the courts the ex-consul told an amazing tale. He overlooked the fact that he had first met me in Buenos Aires, and solemnly announced to the court that he had found me in London, where I was then an unknown singer. Having discovered that I was a musical genius, that I had a voice which would become famous in both hemispheres, he had decided to spend all his savings in order to bring me to the front. I forget how much he mentioned in this preposterous story. Anyway, it was far in excess of the sum that he had taken from me. And the reason why he had stolen this 27,000 francs, he

said, was that I, now successful, had forgotten completely my obligations to him and was careless of the fact that it was to him alone I owed all my triumphs and material prosperity. He told the court how he had asked me to repay him only a little of the money that he had expended in raising me to my pedestal, but that I had haughtily refused. It was then that the idea had entered his mind to recover the money by subterfuge. My astonishment at his audacious tale may be readily imagined. No credence whatever was given to his story by the judge, who sentenced him to—if I remember rightly—seven months' imprisonment.

The 27,000 francs were not recovered for me, but I was lucky to have escaped with no heavier losses. Before that time and since attempts, mostly unsuccessful, to secure some of my earnings were made by unscrupulous persons who, particularly in North and South America, have an unpleasant habit of popping up on the most unexpected occasions. I shall have more to say in a later chapter as to my strange experiences and fortunate escapes from some of these unpleasant persons.

Of those five seasons during which I was singing in Mexico, all were financially successful. To those unacquainted with the country this may not seem surprising, but to the experienced it is regarded as phenomenal. Very few singers finish a season in Mexico, for several reasons. One is that the climate, which in Mexico City is very delightful, is by no means as propitious throughout the Republic.

The altitudes range from a little above sea-level to nearly nine thousand feet, with consequent variations of temperature and comfort. But it is not only the climate that adversely affects the opera company. There are many other detrimental influences. The country is poor, and high-priced singers seldom attract enough money to the box-office to make the season profitable to the manager. As I have already pointed out, the Mexicans will rave over a good singer and are never indifferent to opera. Yet the expenses of a touring company are so enormous, the cost of transportation is so great, and the hotel charges are so frequently in the opposite ratio to the accommodation supplied that it becomes almost impossible for an ordinary company to pay its way.

The hotel-keepers will show you a room as cheerless and uninviting as a prison cell, divided from the others by so thin a partition that you can hear every word spoken several rooms away, and will demand payment at as high rates or higher than those asked in New York or in the first-class hotels in London. At one hotel, for instance, I was charged six Mexican dollars (about three American) for a plate of cold meat. All other charges to me were proportionate, although I knew from the other, but native, visitors that they were eating excellent table d'hôte luncheons or dinners for about 85 cents a meal. I remonstrated with the hotel proprietor, who replied that the charges to me were the same as he made to all tourists; and

when I pointed out that there were others staying in the hotel who were having equal accommodation for about one-third the charges, he advanced the rather impudent argument that as I was taking from the town a lot of money in salary, for singing, it was up to him to get some of it back. He further argued that, since I was doubtless ever ready to take the highest salary I could demand, I should not blame him for doing the same for his accommodation, to which I might have retorted that many people thought that my voice justified an unusual fee, but that he was providing less than ordinary comforts for extraordinary charges. Unfortunately, there was no rival hotel in the town to which I could go, a circumstance of which my ungallant host was thoroughly cognizant when I made my protest.

Another drawback to profitable opera in Mexico is the long list of people who expect Press courtesies. Even in the smaller towns which can barely support one daily and one evening newspaper, I found to my amazement the names of sometimes as many as seventy journalists on the roll for free tickets. These journalists claimed to be the correspondents of newspapers published all over the globe, from China to Peru, from Christiania to Queensland. To my practical mind I could see no advantage to me or to my company to fill the opera house in this way, particularly when it meant the exclusion of some sixty or seventy persons who were prepared to pay full prices for the stalls so

occupied. It was quite clear to me that these alleged journalists never corresponded with the newspapers they professed to represent, and that even if they were the recognized correspondents they were not expected to write on any subject of less general importance than the assassination of the President, the burning of the House of Parliament, or a revolution.

What annoyed me and many others who have preceded and succeeded me in my Mexican tours was the discovery that these pseudo-journalists actually used to make money out of the privilege they held. For they appeared in their places during the first act, then would disappear and their seats be occupied by strangers who had paid their predecessors for the privilege of using their ticket-stubs. There exists at the Royal Albert Hall, London, a privilege embarrassing to artists and impresarios, whereby nearly a thousand people may be present without payment every time the hall is open. These are not the journalists, but, so I am informed, those, or their heirs, who at the time when the hall was built were given seats in perpetuity by contributing generously to the scheme. Now everyone who would sing or play to the people of London at the Royal Albert Hall has to give his or her services free to nearly one-tenth of the total accommodation. To me that seems an unfortunate state of affairs; still when we take the hall, we know that this is one of the provisions and accept it accordingly. But when we are in Mexico and find

the pseudo-journalists swarming into all the best seats, and then selling them to their friends and preventing the company from getting the return for their work to which they are entitled, artists may be excused for protesting.

However, on the other hand, I have had so much kindness and assistance shown to me by genuine journalists in other countries, particularly in America and England, that I would like to say that what is common in Mexico is certainly uncommon elsewhere. Probably I have met and talked with at least as many journalists as any other living singer, and I have nothing but kindly memories for the great majority of these hard-worked members of a very noble and useful profession.

CHAPTER X

A RUNAWAY IMPRESARIO

MY travels in Mexico were not destined to end without my experiencing the disagreeable sensation of being attached to an opera company left stranded by its impresario. Not that this experience is at all novel for a professional singer. In Mexico and in some of the South American States it used to be the exception for an impresario to return from a tour with his own company.

I have already written of my experience as a diva-impresario in Argentina, and told of the misfortunes so frequently suffered by operatic artists on tour. In Mexico the impresario and his artists frequently part before a quarter of the tour is completed. Impresarios in this State are not men of much substance: a few poor houses, due, perhaps, to feeble advertising or clashings with other and unexpected events of strong local interest, and the impresario finds himself on pay-day with no funds. If he is a brave man he calls his company together and explains to them the bleak situation. If the company is wise and does not show too much primitive human nature, a working arrangement is effected and the company struggles on. A few

good houses may put matters right. But if the impresario, instead of bravely facing the situation, acts the coward and disappears with what money there is, then the lot of the company is desperate.

It was one of the cowardly type of impresarios who ran my company into the Mexican wilds on one occasion. He had agreed to pay me a salary which, he said afterward, was too high to allow of the tour's being financially successful; the salaries which he had promised to pay the other artists were also correspondingly high. As an impresario he was not a success. The towns we visited under him did not know of our coming until we arrived. We sang on the wrong days, and it was not until we were leaving that the inhabitants were fully awakened to the fact that Tetrazzini and her company, who had caused such a furore in South America and in their capital, Mexico City, and who had stirred and pleased the great dictator Diaz and his wife, were actually among them; and so the last night's takings were usually equal to those of all the preceding performances.

It was clear to me and the whole company that there was something wrong with the business side of our tour. I called the impresario aside and remonstrated with him concerning the arrangements. He was looking very pale and worried and promised that he would wire to his advance agent to improve matters. But I was not satisfied with his reply; there was a suspicious droop of the eyes which suggested to me that all was not well with

him, and that there was trouble coming for all of us. My fears were quickly realized. That night—our farewell—we played to a full house. During the interval we were to collect our pay. As we waited and chatted behind the scenes someone raised the query as to the whereabouts of our principal. A search was made, but he could not be found. An anxious look came into every face as the minutes passed and no impresario appeared. Everyone was thinking the same thing, although so far no one had expressed his fears in words. It was a very long interval that night, and there was much noisy clamoring before the curtain rose on the last act.

But there was no impresario behind the scenes or in front of the house when that curtain ascended. He had entered the last train which left the town that night for Mexico City. With him were the company's share of the takings of the box-office and, incidentally, the money due to us. As all artists who have had a similar experience and as every one of my readers will thoroughly appreciate, it was a very apprehensive and white-faced group of singers which assembled in the green-room at the back of the stage in that out-of-the-way Mexican city at the close of the performance. "Let's call in the police," was the advice of one, while another was for immediately breaking up the company and returning to the capital in search of the renegade employer. He accompanied the remark with such vigorous threats as to the way he

would handle him, as to make both the contralto and myself shudder.

During the discussion, some of the artists disclosed their financial condition, and I think it was the sorry state in which the majority were that prompted me to make my suggestion. There were among us several women whose total possessions did not amount to ten Mexican dollars, which, at the rate they were charging us for hotel accommodation on that tour, would have maintained them for about twenty-four hours. While the men stormed, one or two of the younger women were openly weeping.

Then I made my proposal. I told the company of my experiences in South America as a diva-impresario, of the success which had attended my efforts, and expressed the opinion that what I had done in the Southern half of this great New World I could repeat in the Northern part. I had enough money with me to pay the expenses of the company for the next week, and I told them if it were necessary I would get some more wired to me from my own reserves in Mexico City. With this I offered to pay the whole of the expenses of the next week or two of the tour, including the full salaries of all the artists. Further, I proposed to take charge of all the receipts, as well as to make myself responsible for meeting every legitimate charge. If at the end of the tour there were money in hand, I was to take from that sum the amount of my own salary, according to the rate at which I was

to have been paid by our missing impresario, and then, if there were still money remaining, I suggested that we should make an equal division among us all. As I talked and unfolded my plan, I noticed, subconsciously, that the women dried their tears and looked at me with eyes in which hope and eagerness had taken the place of disappointment and despair. The tenor and the baritone ceased to utter imprecations against the missing impresario and eagerly offered to try it. Before the conference ended one or two women, who but half an hour before were wringing their hands, were discussing the amount that there would be left over for the final share-out. Hope springs eternal in the human breast. Anyway, the whole company readily agreed to my proposal and gave me full authority to act in their name.

I had already sufficient experience of the world to know that human nature will readily enthuse at the inception of an enterprise, but is apt very soon to grow weary and lazy. So I took good care to watch over every side of the company's activities. I insisted on plenty of rehearsals, with the result that the standard of our company was higher at the end of our tour than the beginning. So that there should be no "unfortunate occurrences" in the region of our little treasury, I kept a very close watch on the dollars that came in and were paid out. It was a very exacting tour for me. It meant that hours before the curtain went up I was seated in the little office watching and checking the tak-

ings and assuring myself that my company was not being cheated. I was all the more careful as to the box-office takings because on a previous tour I was flagrantly robbed.

My manager on that tour had an excellent eye for "counting the house." On one occasion when the box-office returns were handed him, he saw immediately that there was a big discrepancy between them and the numbers in the house. Yet apparently everything was correct. The returns revealed that so many tickets had been sold and the money for these handed over, that so many courtesy tickets had been issued and the bunch of unsold tickets seemed to make the figures of the returns square exactly with the known seating capacity of the building. Still my manager, who knew Mexico and the Mexicans' tolerance of graft and trickery full well, was dissatisfied. He told me of his fears, and I, too, felt rather than knew that he was right. We decided to go thoroughly into the matter, but knowing the practices of the country, elected to work secretly. We engaged some private detectives, who soon discovered that there was one set of tickets of which we knew nothing. Money was taken for these, but no returns were made. They differed only slightly in appearance from the authorized tickets. Yet the doorkeeper knew them and had instructions to pass their holders through into the theatre. Thus a box reported to us to be empty was found to be filled with persons admitted on the forged tickets.

When we discovered what was happening we acquainted the police, and three persons were arrested on the following evening. What still amazes me is that we were able to expose the plot without the organizers' realizing what we were doing. For on the day when it was my manager's duty to press the charges, it was found, to our astonishment, *that the greatest offender of all was the son of the Chief of Police,* with whom the business negotiations for leasing the theatre had been concluded.

How many companies who had preceded us had been cheated in this way no one outside the clique knows. The practice might have been in operation for years and still be in vogue but for the sharp eyes of my manager. I must confess that I was not surprised at the discovery, or at the fact that the son of the official who ought to have been the farthest removed from suspicion was the chief offender. For on every hand in Mexico one heard tales of graft and financial trickery in high places. Everyone had a story to tell of a Government contractor who submitted two bills for work done or goods supplied, one for the amount he was to receive, and one for a very much larger amount which would figure in the public records, of which he would only receive the agreed sum, the difference between the two being pocketed by the Government official who handed out the contract.

It was because of this experience that I was the more careful over the box-office returns during this tour in which I played the dual rôle of diva-

impresario. There were no attempts to defraud us on the same scale as the one I have just narrated, and our tour went swimmingly. It was not long before I found myself able to pay all expenses out of receipts. Having passed that stage I determined to work my hardest to make this the most successful tour, so that if ever I saw my impresario again I could tell him, besides other things, what he had lost through his cowardice. There was soon money to spare for advertising; after which there was no performance at which the house was not packed. I have forgotten the exact amount of the spoils of that tour which we divided when the curtain dropped for the last time, but it was a very considerable sum, so big that every member of the company begged me, before we broke up, to take him (or her) on any subsequent tour in which I again played the dual rôle of prima donna and impresario.

I had one very formidable and unexpected encounter on that particular tour which I shall always remember. As those who know Mexico are aware, at least ninety per cent of the population are Catholics, which means that the Catholic Church, of which I too am a member, has an immense influence. The town of Morelia is a veritable paradise —blue sky, balmy, delicious climate and happy-go-lucky indolence. The cathedral is built on an eminence in the centre of the town. Four large electric lights on the tower of the cathedral—sym-

bolizing the Church lighting the world—serve to illuminate the major part of the town.

It was night when I arrived at the station, but I found to my great joy the Archbishop's carriage was waiting to take me to my hotel. The carriage was a most elaborate, high-up construction, its interior upholstered in red velvet and the outside tastefully gilded. I was very tired, and I breathed a sigh of satisfaction as I sank onto the soft velvet cushions. Alas! it was not to be all velvet and cushions in Morelia.

Before we arrived we had received a request for the names of the operas we proposed to play during our week at Morelia, and I had replied that they would be *Lucia,* the opera in which I had made such great successes in South America, *Dinorah, Traviata,* the opera in which I was destined to make my sensational London début, and *The Barber of Seville.* Imagine my astonishment to be informed on my arrival that neither *Traviata* nor *The Barber of Seville* were of the type that could be performed in Morelia. London, I believe, is considered to be more scrupulous as to its stage morals than Mexico, and yet I was to be prevented from singing in Morelia a part in which I was subsequently to be "lionized" in London for singing so well. Still, I could appreciate the objection to the part of Violetta, in *Traviata,* because of the life she is made to lead in the underworld of Paris. Yet the whole company as well as myself were at a loss to understand why *The Barber of Seville* was

banned, and so we asked for an explanation. It was promptly forthcoming. In the opera Count Almaviva, the tenor, disguises himself as a priest in the famous lesson scene, and such a performance could not be countenanced!

I was dismayed when a chorister reported that the Sunday preceding our opening a Jesuit priest had preached a sermon warning the public against the evils of the opera. One of his arguments was, "If you go once, you will go a second time. If a second time, then a third, and thus you will run a grave risk of forgetting God." Consequently the opening night saw the theatre only half full. It was the first sign of failure since I had taken over the reins dropped by our runaway impresario. Save for a few American and English women, the audience was entirely composed of men. The Mexican women had taken literally the warnings of their priest. The second and third performance drew a house one-quarter full. A Sunday was to intervene before our next public appearance, and I decided to make the very best use of the intervening time. Only a vigorous effort would avert disaster. I intended to make a bold bid to transfer the influence of the Church to my own side. If, I thought, I could get the priest to alter his attitude, we could soon change a partial failure into an unqualified success. So I wrote a very strongly worded letter to the priest. In it I pointed out that since he did not wish it we would not give the two operas to which he had raised objection, although

I emphasized the fact that this was the first time in my career that I had ever heard a word raised against either of them by the Church to which I was proud to belong.

I pointed out further that his public remarks about opera were having a serious effect upon seventy families represented by my company, who might be reduced to starvation. I said that opera, far from being a questionable pastime as he had suggested, was an elevating art, as our Church had always recognized. We had no ballet dancers, no girls in tights, our singers used no vulgar or indecorous language and the words they sang were written by the greatest composers. I concluded the letter by stating that if he persisted in his opposition I should be obliged to appeal directly to the representative in Mexico of His Holiness the Pope on behalf of the seventy families in my company.

I am glad to say that the priest read my letter, and when he saw our point of view wrote immediately and apologized for his attitude. He went further. The next day he made a statement eulogizing the grand opera which we were giving and our company as well, which was one of the best advertisements we could have had. The result was seen the next night. All the town which had been kept back through the Church influence now flocked to the theatre in such numbers that it was with difficulty that the artists were able to get through the human throng to the stage entrance. The takings were phenomenal, and so much extra

was collected for standing room that, despite the loss on the first few houses, we were able to leave with a very large margin of profit after paying all the expenses.

In order not to offend religious susceptibilities we took a few liberties with the operas we gave during those last few nights. The title of the well-known opera *Dinorah,* for instance, we changed to *The Pardon of the Virgin,* and advertised it as a Biblical opera. So far as we knew, none present recognized that the new sacred opera was the same work that Meyerbeer wrote as far back as 1859.

I have many other pleasant and unpleasant recollections of those days I spent touring Mexico. I still involuntarily shudder as I think of some of the hotels with their musty, verminous beds, their broken wash-basins, their mud wells and unsanitary conditions. Yet the railways—those were the days before Huerta and Carranza fought for and smashed the trains and the bridges—were commendably good, the cars roomy and comfortable.

The Mexicans on the whole were quite as ready to do me honor as the more southern republics. I was frequently met at the station by the chief citizen of the town, attended by one or more of the local bands, who would escort me to my hotel. After a performance the bands would come and serenade me as I was taking supper or about to retire.

Bull-fighting is a national sport, and the Mexicans consider they can do no greater honor to a visitor than to organize one of these events in his

or her interest. Many times have I been reluctantly compelled to attend one of these bull-fights. The organizers cannot realize it possible that there are persons living who dislike to see one of these spectacles, and so make the arrangements without consulting the wishes of the one they propose to distinguish.

The sight of a bull goaded to madness and then slaughtered was always repulsive to me. I used to keep my eyes closed as long as possible. But I was "in Rome" and "Rome" expected me to obey her customs. On these occasions the chief toreador used to send one of his handsomest mantles to drape the front of the box set apart for me. These mantles are gorgeous creations, magnificently embroidered, and cost a little fortune. At the end of the fight the toreador would dedicate his slaughtered bull to the Signora Tetrazzini. Immediately this was done there would follow a roar of applause, and I would then rise in my box and bow my acknowledgments. It then behooved me to send a token, an article of jewelry, or some other souvenir of the occasion, together with a purse of money, to the toreador.

I remember that on one occasion in Mexico City the toreador was a very famous man who earned almost as much in his vocation as I did in mine. The opening procession of picadors and toreadors round the arena, with their brilliantly colored mantles thrown over their shoulders, was an imposing spectacle. Arrived at my box, the proces-

sion halted, and the chief toreador gave me a sweeping bow and threw a mantle up to me, thus placing me in a position of pre-eminence over all the assembled ladies. After what was hailed as a very fine and traditional kill, the toreador dedicated the bull to me and awaited his reward. Unfortunately for me, in my hurry to prepare for the occasion, I had overlooked the purchase of a suitable present for the toreador. So I took from my finger a very costly diamond ring and threw it down to the expectant hero. He caught it deftly and then paraded round the arena exhibiting the prize. It was a glorious day and the large diamond, flashing back the sun's rays, could readily be seen. The handsome nature of the gift was the subject of much comment in the Press of Mexico City on the following day. That the dashing hero of the fight himself was pleased with the gift was shown a few days later, when there arrived at my hotel a handsome piece of silverware on which my name was inscribed, the donor, who was the toreador, adding that he hoped I should keep it as a souvenir of a great day. Which I have done.

Some of the opera houses and theatres in Mexico are magnificent buildings, modern, artistic, with excellent acoustics. But there are not many of them. Often I found myself singing in dreary, uncomfortable halls. Some of these halls had been used for all kinds of purposes. One, I remember, served as a gymnasium, and in the centre of the makeshift stage was a fixed post, part of the gym-

nastic apparatus which caused us considerable embarrassment, as well as much unseemly amusement while we were playing. That night the opera was *Faust,* and the lovers, try as they might to avoid it, frequently found themselves separated by this ridiculous post.

My dressing-room, too, had made me feel very uncomfortable as I was preparing for the performance. The atmosphere seemed oppressive and caused me to be unusually sad, a great contrast to my normal light-hearted state when about to appear in public. It was very dimly lighted, but the illumination was sufficient to enable me, during the interval, to explore my mystery room. It was a great barn-like place with a high ceiling half hidden by spiders' webs. During my survey I was startled to discover penciled on the wall a number of pathetic appeals, as, for instance, "Madonna, come to my aid!" "Madonna, have mercy on me!" "Daddy, dear, come and take me away." It was quite evident that this place was not normally a dressing-room. So I asked the purpose for which this apartment was generally used. To my consternation I learned that it was—*the children's prison!*

At Queretaro, where the Emperor Maximilian was shot, I had several strange experiences. We visited the memorial chapel erected to the memory of the Emperor and two Mexican generals who were shot at the same time. There are three tablets to their memory in this chapel, which stands on

ground then owned by a wealthy American. We also saw a large museum in the town containing mementoes of the Emperor, including one ghastly relic which I shall not readily forget. It was the rough wooden box in which the body of Maximilian was placed immediately after his death, and the stains of the royal blood were still apparent.

Another peculiar incident happened when I was in my hotel at one of the larger Mexican cities. My room was on the ground floor and it abutted on the garden. Early one morning my attention was attracted by a tapping on the window, the blinds of which were down. I raised them and then saw the raggedest man I have ever seen before or since. His sole clothing was a piece of shawl. If he had been seen so apparelled in England or the United States, he would have been arrested. "Charity, charity, signora," he begged. As he was so obviously a genuine case I felt disposed to parley with him. "My good man," I said, "it seems to me that you have very great need of charity. You are probably hungry, thirsty, without money, and certainly almost without clothes. Now, which of these four would you prefer most?" He seemed uncertain how to answer this question, for he paused and tugged at his tousled hair. Then he said, "Something to wear, signora, please." That he should ask clothes instead of money tickled me slightly, and I sent him out food and drink and a huge shawl, the kind that the Scots call a plaid. He was very grateful, too grateful, for he started to change his clothes on the spot. After he had

effected the exchange he was departing, leaving the filthy rag in which he had arrived outside my window. But I called him back. "Oh, no, my friend, I have no need of charity. Take both," I said for I feared that until disinfected the old rags might be an object of some danger. With another grateful smile he did as I asked.

Other experiences of a diverting character fell to my lot during those Mexican seasons, but they will take too much time to write and will occupy too much space. One other incident only I will mention here, and that was the occasion when I visited the celebrated Big Tree in the village of Tule. I noticed that the trunk of this giant bore the names of many persons, and I thought that I might inscribe my own on it as well. Borrowing a knife from my friend, I proceeded to carve in the bark in big letters the name Tetrazzini. I did not know then that this treatment of the celebrated tree was contrary to the State regulations. But I knew it very soon, for two native policemen espied me, and, hurrying up, put me under arrest. I think I was more amused than frightened, although they seriously intended to take me to the police station. However, we did not get so far as that, for the Governor, who was near by, was telephoned for by one of my party. Hurrying to the scene, he learned my identity. Immediately he heard my name he shouted to the native policemen to release me, exclaiming that to have the name Tetrazzini inscribed by herself on their

famous big tree was one of the best advertisements that the locality could have. With that he ordered my captors to be taken off to spend a few hours themselves in the cells for not showing more common sense in the performance of their task, which punishment, I felt, was rather too hard on men who were only doing their duty.

CHAPTER XI

LONDON'S CALL

NOW came the event to which I had been looking forward from the days when I was a tiny girl gladdening my mother's heart by singing the operas while sweeping the stairs in my Florentine home. London called!

Many times have I been asked why I waited so long before essaying an attack on the greatest city in the world. The only answer that I could give was that I was always too busy elsewhere and was invariably booked up when an offer came to sing in London. Not that before 1907 I had ever received an offer quite tempting enough to induce me to cancel arrangements I had aleady made. English impresarios, it is true, had approached me, but they had nothing to offer which quite came up to my idea so far as London was concerned. As I have already mentioned I had never made it a general practice to insist on appearing only in those operas which suited me, irrespective of the claims of others in the operatic company. I refer to countries where I was already known. But London was different. Success meant so much and failure so much too in London that I felt I must leave nothing to chance. I had long made up my mind

that only as a prima donna singing in one of my favorite old Italian operas would I consent to appear in the centre of the British Empire. Further, it must be on the stage at Covent Garden Theatre, the famous opera house where all the great singers of the past half-century had won their biggest triumphs, and on no other that I would make my bow to London.

Some may criticize me for aiming so high, but it must be remembered that, though unknown to England, I had already attained to the highest pinnacle of fame as a prima donna in my own country as well as in other European nations, in Mexico, and in South America. What amazed me most on meeting the English people, particularly some of the well-known writers, was their ignorance of South America and their contempt for the reputation made by an artist in the Latin Republics.

And yet Latin Americans are second to none in their appreciation of music and music makers. So critical are the people of the South American Republics that it is more difficult for a singer to "arrive" in the Argentine or Brazil than in London or New York. The wealthy South American Republics have frequently paid enormous sums to great singers—sums higher than are paid in England or the United States. The great Patti was paid more for an appearance in Buenos Aires and other South American towns than anywhere else in her world-kingdom. My own earnings in South America, as I have already stated, were enormous,

and increased tremendously with every season I spent there. As these people pay the highest, they expect the best singers and musicians that the world can produce.

Yet London, I found, is not willing to accept an artist on the strength of a reputation made in Buenos Aires. Even Mr. Higgins, the capable and courteous managing director at Covent Garden, did not expect too much from the Tetrazzini who had caused such wild enthusiasm among the warm-blooded music lovers of Buenos Aires. After my London début, and the repetition in the English capital of some of the tumultuous scenes which had happened after my first night at Buenos Aires, the friends of Mr. Higgins—so he afterward told me—showered on him their congratulations for having "discovered" Tetrazzini. Whereat Mr. Higgins, with his characteristic modesty, declared that the maximum effort he had made to secure me for London was to *offer me* £300 *to keep away.*

Strange though it may seem, that is exactly what he did do. Yet his action was made in a more kindly spirit than his bluff declaration suggests, as will be seen.

My call to London was mainly due to the influence of Signor Campanini, who was a conductor at Covent Garden for many years, and who was married to my sister Eva. Signor Campanini, of course, knew of my vocal powers, and when opportunity offered he mentioned my name to Mr. Higgins. That was early in 1907. I was then about

to return to Italy after one of my triumphant tours in South America and Mexico. When I reached Rome I received a letter from Mr. Higgins which contained the invitation to Covent Garden. It was the desire of my heart fulfilled! For I was to play the principal soprano rôle in several operas, beginning with *Traviata,* for ten performances at Covent Garden. The sum that I was offered was £120 a performance—£1,200 for the brief season. So far as the salary was concerned, it was not an attractive offer. I was drawing a far bigger sum per performance in the Latin Republics of the New World. Nevertheless, I literally jumped and sang for joy as I read the fateful invitation. London—at last! Now my voice would be heard and described to the world by some who had heard and described and helped to make world-famous that constellation of divine songstresses of a dying age described in England as the Victorian era. I thought of such eminent singers as Patti, Jenny Lind, Malibran, Grisi, Sontag, Tietjens, Nilsson and Lucca, all public idols in their day. Would I be able to make a hit which would entitle me to a coveted place by their side in the comparatively short scroll of musical fame? I resolved that I would get there even if to do so meant a superhuman effort. I immediately wrote to Mr. Higgins and closed with his offer.

There was plenty of time in which to prepare for England, but I wasted not a moment. I think I sang *Traviata* through that morning before I ate

my breakfast. I determined that every note, every trill, every run, every cadenza of that great compositon should be produced by my voice as near to perfection as is humanly possible. I acted the parts as I sang them. I studied again the character of Violetta, the courtesan, recalling with a smile as I did so, I remember, the attitude of the Jesuit priest at Morelia, who had banned this opera as immoral, though I had been lent the exalted church carriage in which to drive to the opera house.

I determined that no artifice known to a public singer which might help me to win through should be overlooked in my preparation for London, and I felt then very much like the Americans at their sports—that *to win* and not the play was everything.

"Don't be too nervous or too ambitious," was the counsel that a very dear friend insisted on giving me at this fateful period. "I am not nervous, but I am ambitious," I retorted on one occasion, "and I have just got to make a hit in London." My friend shook her head rather sadly.

"You may be so disappointed," said she. "London is not Florence, it is not Rome, and it is not Buenos Aires. We Southerners lose our heads over music. Not so in England. The English race is so cold-blooded. Phlegmatic, they call themselves. They never grow excited. When they are happy they never show it. They laugh when they are displeased. They forget to shake hands when

they meet a friend. Dearest friends never shake hands at all. They are not a very musical race, and they produce no operas. Though they will listen to Italian opera, they don't like it nowadays as well as modern French and Wagnerian opera. London is a very, very difficult stage. Don't be too eager, or you may come back disappointed and very depressed."

I listened to my friend as she croaked, and for a time I felt sad and disconsolate. "She must be right," I told myself, for I had previously heard similar things said of London by other singers. But I was not to be cast down for long. "After all, Buenos Aires is at least as difficult as London," I said to myself time and time again, and continued to school myself for the coming début.

Then came the bombshell! The contract, properly signed, had reached me safely, and I had gone my way singing publicly up and down Italy and generally preparing for my London visit. The contract was not for the regular season, but for a late autumn season, which was to follow the return to town of the London public. I was to sing during November—not an ideal month for opera in London.

Unfortunately for Covent Garden, the early season of 1907 had fallen very flat, although, as I heard subsequently, the directors had spent nearly a quarter of a million pounds to make the season a dazzling success. All opera was passing through a difficult phase in England at this time, and the

old school of Italian opera had been almost entirely shelved. These were the days of Wagner, Saint-Saëns and Gounod.

The year had opened badly. I was shown a translation of a description which appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* of the first nights' performances. The writer, in common with other critics, was rather caustic, but his remarks show the popularity which the new Wagnerian school had obtained in England.

"The opera season," he wrote, "made a quiet start at Covent Garden last night with a performance of *Das Rheingold*. Years ago it would have been reckoned a strange proceeding indeed to initiate the season with a work which is played in a pitch-dark auditorium in one long act of two hours and a half, and affords thereby the minimum for social display; but nowadays it is taken as quite a matter of course. Of late years, indeed, the season at Covent Garden has tended more and more to resolve itself into two distinct parts, which might be defined respectively as the grave and gay, with Wagnerian opera predominating in the former, and works of a higher type in the latter. And the arrangement is not without its advantages from various points of view. But it does not give the season a brilliant send-off from the social chronicler's point of view. We must wait till Caruso comes to see the duchesses and the diamonds in all their glory, and in the meantime must console

ourselves as best we may with such consolation as Wagner offers."

Die Walküre followed *Das Rheingold,* and the other two operas in the *Ring* were next given. Then came *La Bohême,* and the reappearance of Caruso in the part of Rudolfo. Despite Caruso and Melba and the frequent presence of the King and Queen, the season was not so successful as was expected, and it was not surprising that toward its end I received a communication from Mr. Higgins telling me that the prospects for the autumn season were so unpromising that he would like me to postpone my London visit until the opening of the early season in 1908.

At that time I did not know London or Mr. Higgins so well as I do now. All I could see was that the preparations I had been making and my aspirations were all in vain if I agreed to the proposition. Even in grand opera a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Above all, I was keenly desirous of going to London, and down in my heart felt that, instead of being injured by appearing in an unsuccessful season, I might conceivably be able to turn failure into success, as I had done in the New World on more than one occasion.

I wrote to Mr. Higgins and told him this, adding that I could not see my way to agree to a cancellation of the contract for 1907 even if the offer he made for 1908 were a more attractive one. But Mr. Higgins was not taking my first "No" as final. He wrote me another letter in which he reiterated

the arguments he had at first advanced, and then said that as a further inducement to me to break my contract the directors were ready to make me a grant of £300. Mr. Higgins probably thought that this monetary offer would have the desired effect. The effect on me was the opposite of what was expected. It showed me most clearly the very limited knowledge of my voice which was then held in the great metropolis. As Covent Garden seemed to think that a paltry £300 would compensate me for my non-appearance in London, it was plain to me that it had no idea of my earnings in opera up to that date. I replied to the effect that in the first place I had not been attracted to Covent Garden by the salary that was offered, and hinted that I should want twice as much if I were to appear in an English town of less importance. I think I made it plain that my object in accepting was to let the musical critics of the London Press, and Londoners generally, know what they had not seemed to realize until then—that the incomparable old school of Italian opera was not dead, and that Italy could still produce a soprano able to fill the difficult rôles created by the great composers of the past century.

I told Covent Garden very plainly that no inducement, financial or otherwise, that they could offer would lead me to break my contract. I went even farther and stated that if they did not keep to the letter and the spirit of the contract, I would still come to England, but instead of singing near

their fruit and vegetable market, I would proceed against them in the English law courts. At the time I was warned that I was behaving somewhat tactlessly.

"If you threaten your employer when you have him at a disadvantage, he may retaliate on you when the tables are turned," said my friend, adding that if my success were anything short of sensational I need not expect any further engagements at Covent Garden. Knowing human nature as I do, and particularly the ways of operatic managers, I felt that my friend was right in her warning. Since then I have met Mr. Higgins, and found that, like most Englishmen, he has a great admiration for anyone, especially a woman, who discloses a fighting spirit.

Anyway, the Covent Garden directorate received my ultimatum and decided not to oppose me further. Nevertheless, this unfortunate break in the preliminaries of my début in London considerably modified my enthusiasm. It seemed like an omen of ill-fortune. I thought it possible that the real reason why Covent Garden wished me to stay away was something different from that which was stated. Possibly one whom I had offended in some way was doing his or her best to retaliate on me in London. And so when, according to my contract, I arrived in the metropolis a week before the date I was to appear, it was with very mixed feelings. I felt sure that at the last moment some

further attempt would be made to balk me in the desire of my heart.

How different was my arrival in London from that to which I had been accustomed for many years past! In the capitals and most of the other towns of the Latin Republics the governors and mayors and the town bands were at the station to accord me a ceremonial welcome, as though I were a queen or a foreign representative of high rank. But chilly London!

After a trying journey I arrived at Charing Cross. Signor Campanini, as my brother-in-law, knew of my coming, and was the only person awaiting me at the station. We took a cab—a horse cab, for the taxis were recent introductions and were not plentiful in those days—to the Hotel Cecil. I remember gazing out on London for the first time on that cheerless day in the late autumn of 1907, and shivering. It was cold and foggy. The Thames, of which I had so often heard, I was now told flowed past the hotel. I looked down to the Embankment, but I could see no river, although its marge was only a hundred yards away. All I could see were a few tiny points of light, which seemed to penetrate with the greatest difficulty the dense, dirty, yellow fog which enveloped the city. Was this fog yet another omen of ill?

The fog percolated into the public rooms of the hotel; it entered the corridors and my own private apartments. Before I had been in London twenty-four hours I had swallowed more fog than during

all the rest of my life. The first day of my visit I could honestly say, "I don't like London." I remember asking a visitor if the London fogs lasted all the winter; at which he laughed. Then he assured me that the fog that I then saw was not a *typical* London fog. It was just a moderate haze. I must wait, he said, until I saw the real thing—a genuine London pea-souper, which would be at least three times as dense as that which then enshrouded London.

I went to the piano and tried my voice. I found that the fog had already slightly affected my throat. To my super-sensitive ear it seemed as though the notes were slightly clouded in consequence. I turned to my visitor: "Do you seriously say that the fogs are often worse than this horrible yellow stuff that now fills the air? If so, it may be wiser for me to return to Italy at once. I shall never be able to sing in such an atmosphere."

"Do not do anything so desperate, signora," he replied. "Rather let us pray, or sing, or whistle, as the sailors do, for a breeze which will drive it away."

Though I sang a good deal, the only effect that it seems to have had was to intensify the fog which overhung London at the time of my début. As it turned out, it was probably for the better that this was so, as I shall explain later.

Meanwhile I had to make a call at Covent Garden to attend a rehearsal of *Traviata*. The rehearsal morning arrived, and I drove to the theatre. Be-

fore coming to London I had heard that the home of English operatic art stood on one side of England's principal fruit, flower and vegetable market. Yet it was with some amazement that I saw the wagons and the shops in the neighborhood of the opera house all being utilized for market produce. I contrasted the surroundings of England's principal hall of song with those of the imposing squares and open spaces or broad thoroughfares adjacent to other opera houses where I had sung, and I found myself wondering if a people who would allow their chief opera house to be planted on the edge of a vegetable market could be really musical.

I recalled the story that I had once heard of a German prima donna's sudden flight from Covent Garden, of the caustic language in which she had described the atmosphere through which one approached the principal British opera house, and the amusement which had been caused in Germany by her published remarks.

Despite the unpleasant first impressions of the exterior, I was soon to become deeply attached to a building which is certainly one of the finest auditoriums in which I have sung. My voice carries across it with ease, its roomy stage is ideal for the presentation of grand opera, and the dresses and jewelry and social display are incomparably brilliant. Covent Garden on a gala night is a glorious and unforgettable sight. All of the great opera houses, of course, present a pleasing and impressive appearance on great nights, yet there is some-

thing distinctive about Covent Garden which makes it unlike any other opera house in which I have sung. The difference is too subtle, I am afraid, for me adequately to define, yet I sense it every time I sing there. And it is because of that pleasant sensation that I prefer Covent Garden, even with its environment of fruits and vegetables, to almost any other opera house in the world.

But my thoughts were not confined to the house or its surroundings as I arrived at the theatre that morning. Other thoughts were occupying my mind, thoughts of the attempt that the management had made to cancel my contract. In conversation afterward, Mr. Higgins laughingly confessed to me that to the report which was brought to him on my arrival was added the ominous phrase, "Tetrazzini looks very determined and ready to do battle with the whole of the directorate."

I sincerely hope I did not look quite so stern as that report suggested, although I do not deny that I was quite prepared for any change of front that might be made by the authorities. Fortunately there was no occasion for me to do battle. The management, as always, were keeping rigidly to the terms of their contract. When I arrived the company was assembled for the rehearsal and all was ready for me to join them. I was shown into a very pleasing dressing-room, and then the other members of the company were introduced to me. I could tell from their greeting that the name of

Tetrazzini was not very well known to them. However, the rehearsal began, and I soon realized that I was surrounded by a very fine company. As we sang I noticed the entrance of a very tall gentleman, who seemed at first to be taking very little interest in the proceedings. When my arias came along, however, I noticed that he gave a quick movement of his head. It may have been surprise, or appreciation, or both. During the interval he hurried to my side. He was Mr. Higgins, the business manager, who had first engaged me and then offered me £300 to stay away.

From the moment I spoke to him my fears of further difficulties with the management vanished. Englishmen do not develop such enthusiasm as the Italians or the French, as I well knew. But I could see that the director was literally enraptured with my effort; he shook my hand and congratulated me wholeheartedly.

"Your singing is nothing short of marvellous, Signora Tetrazzini!" he exclaimed. The others in the chief rôles were similarly enthusiastic, and I would like to put on record how much I appreciated the disinterested approbation and encouragement of all my colleagues at a time which was the most critical of my life of song.

As for the orchestra, every member seemed to have lost his head. *Prime donne* are not usually heroines to their own instrumentalists, yet the Covent Garden orchestra made a heroine of me during that first rehearsal. How shall I describe

the scene? At the conclusion of the first act they dropped their instruments and clapped and cheered me for several minutes. I had a fleeting suspicion that prior to my arrival Signor Campanini had organized this outburst to hearten me for the coming début, but that was soon dissipated by the hearty nature of the applause and the obvious delight of every musician. And so it came about that my first response to a Covent Garden ovation was when I bowed my acknowledgments to those good-natured instrumentalists. Here surely was a splendid portent to counteract those ill omens previously observed.

I went back to my hotel in a happy mood. "You have astonished the manager, the other singers and the orchestra," I told myself. "Now you must astonish the London public."

One of my friends called my attention to the fact that the journalists of London had not so far discovered my existence. My name figured in the advertisements of the opening performance, but the news columns of the newspapers had no mention of Tetrazzini. How different it was to what I had been accustomed in the New World, where hardly an hour of any day was allowed to pass without the advent of a newspaper representative who wished to print my views on some matter which, he assured me, was of great public moment.

The fashion was first set, I believe, by Adelina Patti, who when in her 'teens was interviewed by a London journalist. Since then business manag-

ers have insisted that their *prime donne* should talk whenever possible to newspaper representatives, so that the publicity given to the interviews may react favorably upon the box-office receipts. In America this practice is more common than anywhere. It was there that the Press agent first made his appearance. His task is to supply the newspapers with information concerning the artist. If the Press agent were given a free hand, he would make his artist do sensational things every day so as to secure more publicity. On the whole, Press agents are more essential to those artists who have not made a great reputation. Instead of having to employ a Press agent to interest the newspapers in me, I was often forced to employ someone to protect me from too much attention from the newspapers, although, as I have already stated, I have always tried to help them whenever reasonably possible.

Sometimes I have had to resort to artifice to escape publicity, as, for instance, when I made my last visit to London in 1920. Not so during those few days prior to my London début. There were few or no callers and certainly no journalists.

When Patti made her début at Covent Garden, Mr. Gye, the manager, called together some of his friends among the musical critics and told them to prepare for a gem of the first water. Paragraphs hinting that a great discovery had been made crept into the newspapers, and there was an air of general expectancy in the audience on the occasion of

Patti's début. Whether or no Mr. Higgins said anything to his friends on the Press as to what he thought of Tetrazzini, I do not know. This I know, however, that the London Press were dumb until I had sung.

I was once asked how I managed to secure such a favorable Press boom in London. Press boom, indeed! The American impresarios would have gone demented if the preliminary Press announcements of any of their stars were on the level with those made concerning me when I came to London. So far as I know, one paragraph, and one only, was published in the London Press. I have kept this notice as an interesting curio. It is very short —only six lines—four of which referred to me. Here it is:

"Madame Luisa Tetrazzini, who has been singing in Buenos Aires, and who has just returned to Europe, will make her first appearance at Covent Garden on Saturday next in *Traviata*. The list of tenors has been further strengthened by the engagement of Signor Giraud, who will make his first appearance here as Don José in *Carmen*."

—*Daily Graphic*, Oct. 29, 1907.

These four lines, appearing at the foot of a column in one London daily newspaper, were not likely to cause an immediate rush to hear me sing. Nor did they, as the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER XII

MY BOW TO LONDON

AS the hour fixed for my London début drew near, I sat alone in my hotel apartments musing over the wonderful things that had happened to me in the past through my gift of song, and building little castles in the air for my future. I was feeling more nervous than I had ever felt, and I fervently wished that the nerve-trying ordeal were over.

Despite my state of nervous tension, however, I had supreme faith in my vocal and histrionic powers. It will be remembered that on the occasion of my début at sixteen, in my native Florence, I was not deterred by nervous apprehension or by stage fright. It was only at a later period, when I had registered several important successes, that I awoke to the stern realities of the profession I had adopted and began to feel really frightened.

After Madrid and Buenos Aires that feeling vanished, I thought never to return. But it came back to me with all its old-time force as I sat in my hotel that Saturday afternoon. It remained with me in the evening, and it was not until the end of the first act that I was again the normal, light-hearted, happy Tetrazzini

As we sat at tea that afternoon, one of our party, seeking to encourage me, declared that tomorrow all London would be talking of me. "Perhaps," I replied; "but what will they be saying? Will they accept me, or will they say that the old Italian school and its modern coloratura interpreter is not wanted here?" "Oh, don't be pessimistic, signora," was the reply. "Remember the words of the Seeress of Milan."

The Seeress of Milan, whose name was thus brought into the conversation, was certainly an extraordinary woman if only a tenth of the stories told of her predictions were true. Palmists are in great favor in many enlightened countries. In England, where the practice of their arts is contrary to the law of the country, they are, nevertheless, consulted by all grades of society. Some English women of my acquaintance make a practice of visiting a palmist, a crystal-gazer, or a woman of this type, at least once a month. That these women find it profitable to dispense flattery is well known; it is said that those who paint the rosiest futures have the largest clientèle.

I have only once consulted one of these visionaries, and am unable to say whether her statements to me were similar to those she had made to any other person. But I do know that they were different from what she told friends of mine when they consulted her. It was not long before my London début that I saw this remarkable person in her "witch's den" in Milan. No one knew of

my projected visit, and I took every precaution to disguise my identity. From the wardrobe of one of my domestics I borrowed some clothing which gave me the appearance of a very poor woman of the lower classes.

I put a tattered shawl over my hair, and I wore a pair of blue, cracked spectacles to help to hide my features. Before leaving my home I walked into my garden to see the effect of my make-up on the gardener. He demanded to know what I was doing there, informed me in no uncertain language that I was trespassing on private ground, and ordered me off my own premises. Obeying his orders, I walked out of my garden gate and made my way in the direction of the den of the Milan Seeress, feeling well assured that if my own gardener did not recognize me there was little danger of my identity being discovered by the woman on whom I was about to call.

The house in which the prophetess resided was in a low quarter of the town. From the exterior it looked dark and weird and forbidding; when inside I found myself comparing it with the assassin's den in *Rigoletto*. It seemed to me then that it was a good thing for my personal safety that I had not come to this quarter well-dressed. At first my hostess, a feeble old woman with white hair and a voice which suggested the croak of a jackdaw, was inclined to the view that I was a business woman disguised. She could tell by my white hands that I was not used to long hours of

rough manual work, although I do a good deal of my own housework. She produced a well-worn pack of greasy cards, made various mysterious signs over them, commanded me to shuffle and cut a number of times, and then disclosed my future. From beginning to end she spoke of me and my doings in the superlative. If, she said, I were a business woman, I should be the most successful business woman living; if I were a poetess, I should become the most famous writer of poems of my time; if a writer, the leading writer; if an actress or a singer, the principal actress or singer in the world. Her insistence in speaking of me in the superlative amused me, and I laughed incredulously as she spoke. But the Seeress insisted that she spoke only truth, as time, she said, would show.

Then she foreshadowed some long journeys for me across the Atlantic. I was to go to New York, where I should create a great sensation, and should go from there all over the American continent, and continue to be acclaimed by all who heard me. But before then I was to receive an offer to visit London. When that offer came, said she, I must accept it irrespective of my first impressions and the attractiveness of the proposal. When I had accepted it, she said, I should have another offer, which I must refuse, for great things awaited me in England's capital. My name would be on every lip, crowds would throng to where I was. "But what shall I be?" I broke in. "If, as you say, I am a business woman, why should crowds come

to see a business woman?" "You have very good business ability," was the ready answer, "but you are not a business woman. You are in a profession, and I believe you are a singer. If so, you must continue to sing, for you are destined to be one of the great singers of the century."

Then she took an egg and broke it. The yolk she took for herself; the white she put into a glass. In the albumen she professed to discover myself and my rivals and, pointing to me, declared: "You will triumph over them all. Enemies you have had, and you will have more; but no one will be able to hurt you."

I did not tell the Seeress who I was, but when I left I presented her with fifty francs. As she took the money her face lighted up and she exclaimed: "I was right. I knew you were not a poor woman, although you come to me in poor raiment. Will you please write to me and tell me all about your triumphs when what I have forecasted for you comes true, as it will?"

On the whole the experience was both interesting and amusing, although I did not attach much importance to it. And I only mention it here because the forecast of this woman was, in a measure, correct.

Saturday evening, November 2, 1907, came, and I, still in a state of nervous excitement, arrived at the theatre to make my bow to London.

"It is Saturday night. The house should be full. Is it?" I inquired of one of the company.

"Oh, yes, signora," said he. "They are turning people away." As he spoke he laughed, and his laugh was echoed by others in the company. I went to the curtain and, drawing it slightly aside, surveyed the great, gloomy-looking auditorium. It seemed empty. "Where are the people?" I asked, this time speaking to one of the directors who stood by. "Don't be agitated, signora," he answered. "The house is full. You cannot see the people because of the fog."

It was quite true that London was again in the grip of the fog-field. My cab had to crawl through the swirling yellow stuff as we travelled to the theatre, and some of the fog had flowed into the auditorium from the street, rendering it difficult to see across the great building. Nevertheless I knew that the authorities were only attempting to minimize the disappointment which I should feel when I realized that I was singing to a poor house.

The theatre was not full. Far from it. Although it was Saturday, the best day of the week for theatres, there were only a few people in the stalls, about two boxes were occupied, the pit and gallery were each about half full. And this was the best audience that all London could produce to hear a new singer. I heard subsequently that the takings were not sufficient to pay my salary for the night—£120. Evidently London did not like old Italian opera, particularly Verdi's *Traviata*. Fog and a poor house on the best night of the week! Truly, grand opera was in a bad way in London.

We started. Signor Panizza was the conductor, and my colleagues in the principal rôles were the great Sammarco as the leading baritone, and Signor Carpi as the tenor. Hesitant and nervous though I was at the start, I sang and acted to the maximum of my powers. Even in this handful of people I thought there must be some who could appreciate my efforts. All the skill, all the arts I possessed, I brought into full play. Soon that handful of people began to respond. As I felt them stirring I found my task easier; my voice seemed to get the notes with less effort. I was acting with greater freedom and more naturally. In fact, I was losing that foolish supersensitiveness and was conscious only of the part. When, as I knew by experience, I could feel thus, I knew that all was well. And so it was. At the end of the first act I knew that I had conquered London.

During the first interval many of the people behind the scenes, including Sammarco, congratulated me profusely. In the front of the house, I heard later, there was unusual excitement. All were enthusiastic, and some, who had only come to pass away a dull evening, were so enraptured that they slipped out to the telephone to tell their friends that a wonderful singer had descended upon Covent Garden. Some of these friends answered the call, and so there were a few more persons in the boxes and stalls during the last two acts. Down in the foyer the musical critics were excitedly discussing the newcomer and comparing

me with other *prime donne* of the past half-century. In all parts of the house there was intense excitement during the second and third acts. It grew until the performance ended with a tornado of applause so loud and sustained that it might have been produced by a crowded house on a gala night. More congratulations from everyone behind the scenes followed, and then I was in my cab crawling back through the fog to my hotel.

"You will sing to a larger audience next week," Mr. Higgins prophesied before my departure from the theatre. "These few people will go back to the West End houses, to the London clubs, to their business offices, and tell a marvellous story of to-night's performance. Even if the Press do not applaud you the public will come after they have heard the description of your singing that these people will give." I felt very happy and tranquil as I retired that night, having previously arranged that the Sunday newspapers should be brought up to me early and that someone who could translate into Italian, French, or Spanish should attend me.

On Sunday morning the newspapers and the translator arrived, and I, with throbbing heart, made ready to hear my fate as decreed by Fleet Street. What would these critics say? Would they echo the applause of the audience or elect to write me down as second rate? As the interpreter turned the pages of one of the newspapers he made an exclamation of joy. "Listen, signora, they call you the new Patti!" In his excitement he held

up the paper for me to see the name of Patti appearing beside that of Tetrazzini.

I still have at my house at Lugano the clippings of the newspapers of those days following my début. In most of them I am described as the new Patti. It was nearly fifty years before that date that Patti had made her bow to Covent Garden and caused a public fever similar to that aroused by her illustrious predecessor, Jenny Lind. In those days not all the critics were unanimous in their recognition of the genius of the little lady. At least one of them made an attack upon her voice. Of course he was wrong, as time and public opinion demonstrated so incontestably. From the press cuttings that I received it would seem that I was luckier than Patti, inasmuch as I escaped any direct attack. One or two newspapers devoted only a short appreciative notice to my début, but when their contemporaries appeared with column eulogies of my gifts, they became more interested, and when I again appeared on Covent Garden stage they gave as much of their space to my work as the others were doing.

So far these reminiscences have proceeded without giving a description of my voice. It was described so often and in such varied language in the London Press at the time that perhaps I may be pardoned for quoting extracts which serve both to describe it to the reader and to indicate the impression that it made upon the musical critics of London. One of the most remarkable descrip-

tions that appeared was published in the *Daily News* under the heading: "Voice of a Century. Dazzling Success of Madame Tetrazzini. A Peerless Soprano."

"We had heard something of Mme. Tetrazzini before Saturday night," (said the writer) "but nothing that prepared us for such a sensational début. The new soprano, who has had the most brilliant successes in South America, where they pay fabulous sums to operatic artists, should prove the greatest attraction Covent Garden has ever had. The voice reminds one now of Melba's and now of Patti's. It is not a big voice as modern dramatic sopranos are accounted, and would not be suitable, I suppose, to modern dramatic music or to grand opera of the type of *Aïda.*" (Here my critic went slightly astray, as one of the operas in which I was invariably successful was *Aïda.* I have appeared in this famous work many hundreds of times.) "But to describe the voice as a light soprano is quite wrong. It may be light in volume and in character, as the voice of Patti was, and of Melba is, but it is capable of more color than the voice of either of these great singers.

"The quality of tone produced by Tetrazzini ravishes the senses. It is soft and golden, and yet has none of the impersonal and chilling perfection of the ordinary light soprano. The most difficult technical problems are executed with the ease which marks a virtuoso's playing of a cadenza in a concerto. Every note is perfect and the singer's command of her resources so complete that there is no sense of a difficulty being overcome. The voice has dramatic edge, too, when required, and it was noticeable that Mme. Tetrazzini dominated the noisy finales of Verdi's *Traviata.*

"Above all, the main impression of her 'Violetta' was not musical alone. I have never seen the pathos of Verdi's heroine realized with such grip and sincerity. In the big scene with 'Giorgio Germont,' most sopranos who can sing *Ah! fors' è lui* with dazzling effect ignominiously fail, because here real acting is required, and singers of the type of Melba and Patti are not great actresses. Mme. Tetrazzini, who to be sure had the advantage of playing with Signor Sammarco, gave the scene a new life. Both by use of her voice and by facial expression, she vividly conveyed the reality of Violetta's sacrifice, and many of us were impressed for the first time by the fact that Verdi had written dramatic music after all.

"In the last act this great artist did not have recourse to the physical gasping by which the majority of sopranos express the agony of the dying woman, but held the audience spellbound by the simple pathos of her singing and by the subtle expressiveness of her acting. In physique she is scarcely more fitted to the part of 'Violetta' than is Mme. Melba.

"I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that Mme. Tetrazzini has the voice of a century and stands out from even the great Italian singers we know in respect of powers of acting with her voice. When we read the accounts of the celebrated singers of the 'coloratura' school, we wondered how they made such deep impressions on their audiences, and we are forced to the conclusion that singing was judged much as we judge the violin playing of a Kubelik.

"Mme. Tetrazzini explained the mystery. Every bar of the music was sung with feeling, expression and dramatic appropriateness. She phrased according to the meaning of the words, and not merely from the point of view of absolute musical display. A run, as she executes it, becomes expressive; a high note

seems a natural dramatic climax. Indeed, she even gave an example of this on her own account. At the end of *Ah! fors' è lui* she introduced a little upward trill which wonderfully expressed the hysterical feeling of 'Violetta.' Such singing gives one a new idea of the capability of the human voice and makes one reconsider modern ideas of writing for it.

"The audience, always quick to recognize great talent, accepted Mme. Tetrazzini with the utmost enthusiasm. Her début will make the autumn season of opera memorable in musical history.—E. A. B."

Such flattering criticism from one of England's greatest daily newspapers was more than I expected, even in the most fantastic of my girlish dreams. But this was only one of many similar articles, all of which were glowingly appreciative. Another, which I feel I must quote for the sake of an adequate record of this, my sensational London début, appeared in the *Daily Mail*. The great newspaper adopted the conventional title of "New Patti," beneath which were other headlines proclaiming my "Triumph at Covent Garden," and that I had "Twenty Recalls."

"It is a curious trait of London audiences" (said the *Daily Mail*) "that they will never believe in the greatness of an artist until they have heard for themselves. Mme. Tetrazzini, who on Saturday night made one of those rare sensations which herald the appearance of a new diva, has already achieved something like fame in South America and on the Continent. But she came to us with no flourish of trumpets, a singer to all intents and purposes unknown.

"Today all London will be hailing the advent of a new operatic star—one of those commanding figures which sweep across the musical horizon once, perhaps, in a generation. For Mme. Tetrazzini's impersonation of 'Violetta' in *La Traviata* shows her the equal of a Patti or a Melba and such a scene of popular enthusiasm as occurred on Saturday at Covent Garden will not lightly be forgotten. This is no exaggerated praise."

After this vigorous opening the critic proceeds to talk of my magic gift of tears!

"So many operatic sopranos" (he says) "regard the part of 'Violetta' merely as a background for the display of vocal pyrotechnics. To use a vulgarism of the stage, they 'walk through it.' Not so Tetrazzini —we may drop the 'Mme.' now, just as we do in the case of Patti, Nordica and Melba. She brings to the old Verdi opera a human tenderness and pathos which few of us realized that it possessed. She has the magic gift of 'tears in the voice,' and is withal a consummate actress."

Describing the effect of my singing on the meagre audience, he says:

"Her rendering of the familiar *Ah! fors' è lui* and the wonderful ease and nonchalance with which she trills upon E in alt completely astonished the audience. For a while the house was silent and spellbound, then the storm burst. Probably since Patti first sang in the part there has not been so great an ovation. Again and again the new singer was recalled and it appeared as though the curtain would go on being raised and

lowered, and Tetrazzini would go on coming forward and bowing, indefinitely. In the foyer between the acts the one topic of conversation was the new Patti."

Mr. Higgins had already told me what the Pressmen were saying concerning myself and Patti during those intervals, and so I was not surprised when the writer stated that:

"Critics of hoary experience compared her to the diva in her best days, and wrapped themselves in a maze of reminiscences. It was a triumph, immediate, complete! During the evening the new Violetta must have had more than twenty recalls. As already said, she has the gift of 'tears in the voice.' There were actual tears among the audience, too, on Saturday night when she sang *Ditt alla Giorgio,* lifted out of its customary vocal display into a song of renunciation, heart-rending in its emotional intensity. Never in late years have we seen *La Traviata* acted as Tetrazzini played it on Saturday night; rarely, if ever, have we heard Verdi's music so exquisitely sung. Let us hope that this great artist will be heard in many other rôles here, for her repertoire is an extensive one.

"To a representative of the *Daily Mail* Mme. Tetrazzini professed herself delighted with her reception. 'It is far, far more than I had hoped for,' she said. 'In America and on the Continent, people had always told me that your London audiences are so cold, so I was not a little nervous when the curtain rose last night. But as soon as I saw the ladies applauding I felt myself at once. That is the most astonishing thing to me about your audiences—the ladies applaud too. It is what one never sees in Italy and Spain, and very rarely elsewhere on the Continent.'

"Tetrazzini's vocal range is an extraordinarily large one, extending from the B below the stave (an exceptional one for a soprano) to E in alt."

Though the writer was not aware of it, I can easily touch higher than E altissimo. Some of the newpapers in those days published music charts to show to their readers the compass of my voice. My readers, from this and the foregoing, will gather something of what the Press of London were writing concerning me in those memorable days of that foggy November in 1907.

Now I must tell of my own sensations.

CHAPTER XIII

FIRST FRUITS OF WORLD FAME

OH, the excitement of those next few days! When I alighted from the continental train a week before none called and few thought it worth while to book seats to hear me sing. Now what a change! I was no longer a stranger in a strange and chilly land. My quarters at the hotel were no longer oppressively, almost ominously, dull and silent. Indeed, I found that I had been transferred to the other extreme.

Persons of whom I had never heard, representing concerns of which I knew little or nothing, crowded in on me at all times of the day and night. The newspapers sent their representatives, who came along to my hotel in dozens. Until that week I did not know and should never have believed that there were so many journals published in one city. The daily Press began to arrive before I had finished my breakfast on Sunday morning. Journalists, like doctors, have no time or liking for formalities. They do not trouble to send up their names, but usually penetrate without assistance to my suite, knock at the door, and then walk in. By lunch time I thought that I had assuredly seen all who would want to know about me; but it was not so. Before I had finished talking to one,

another had arrived, and it was only by going out for a drive in a cab in the afternoon that I was able to obtain a little respite for that day.

One of the journalists was very anxious for me to describe how it felt to become famous in a night. I showed him a photograph of myself at a great bull-fight in Mexico City receiving from the toreador the honors of the kill; I also showed him a picture of some of the frenzied crowds who had acclaimed my voice in South America, and some Press cuttings describing my début before the Italian Royal Family at Rome many years ago.

"It is so long since I was made famous in a night that I almost forget what it feels like," I said to him. But he was not to be put off in that way.

"Ah, signora, you do not quite understand," he persisted. "Newspapers have to give the public what they want to read, otherwise they won't read them. Now the British public love to read about somebody who was a nobody suddenly becoming a great personage. If you can give me something which will contrast your past life of obscurity with your present popularity, it will make very interesting reading. For instance, cannot you tell me a story of how you once tried to obtain a post in the chorus of Covent Garden, and how the authorities there would not offer you a position, with the result that you went away sick at heart, to return later a great prima donna with all London at your feet?"

"I am very sorry that I cannot oblige you," I replied; "but I was never in a chorus. You see, I began to sing as a prima donna." But the journalist would have none of my successes.

"It is your failures that I want to hear about, signora, not your successes. I want to write something which will be the opposite of your great success of last night. I want a kind of a Cinderella story about you: one night a beggar maid, and the next night the belle of the ball, betrothed to the prince."

"Unfortunately, I have had no failures," I answered, speaking somewhat sorrowfully, for by now I was so amused at his quaint request that I felt no resentment at his desire to liken me to a beggar girl. I searched my memory to see if I could find some unfortunate circumstance in my life which would help him. "You see," I went on apologetically, "I did not happen to be born in a family which was starving. I have never yet been forced to go hungry. I have not—"

"Have you never been what we call 'broke'?" he interpolated. "Have you never had to sing in the streets?"

"Yes, I have done that."

At this my inquisitor's eyes lighted up. "That is what I have been wanting to find out. I knew you would be able to tell me a good story if I questioned you sufficiently."

With that he hastily took out his notebook and prepared to write all that I had to say about my

singing in the street. "Where did it happen? How old were you? Did you take up your own collection?" were some of the questions that this young enthusiast fired at me.

"It happened in a number of places," I answered. "Once in San Francisco. That was last year. The townsfolk took up the collection for a local charity. We had nearly a quarter of a million persons present, and a very large sum of money was collected—many thousands of pounds —and——"

But the journalist had stopped writing. "No, no, signora," he protested. "Not that. Not a great concert at which thousands were present, but an ordinary street entertainment—one which you had to give to get a few shillings to pay for your night's lodging. As you sang, someone who heard your voice came up to you and said that one day you would become a great singer—and gave you twopence. Now the day has arrived. Something in that vein!"

I shall never forget the doleful expression on the face of that young journalist as he went out without the story for which he came. He said that his editor had told him before he came that he was to get that particular kind of interview with me —and no other! I sent out the next day for a copy of the journal for which he wrote, being curious to know what he would tell his readers about me. I will not mention the name of that newspaper— it has a large circulation—but I must state that in

my opinion the writer of the article concerning myself displayed a much too vivid imagination. The journalist was obviously more alarmed at the possible wrath of his editor than at the prospect of hurting my feelings, for he pictured me, prior to my arrival in London, as almost one of the submerged tenth, a singer who would count herself fortunate to pick up a few guineas as a member of a *pierrot* troupe. He described my long struggle against misfortune, which, he said, was at last ended through the kindly intervention of a brother-in-law in an influential position at Covent Garden. But for him, said the writer, I might still be an unknown vocalist earning a haphazard living by singing at third-rate concerts.

Though this writer excelled as an imaginative artist, I have met since in America many journalists who could give him a long start and then win. In America, if I were too busy to see a newspaper representative at the moment he called, I might read in his journal on the following day a provocative article describing Tetrazzini as being in the "tantrums," too angry with the world to talk to anyone, or I might read that I was too incensed at some words of praise which had been written in his journal about other artists in the company in which I was singing. Not a pleasant way to treat a lady who might have been out or resting when the unexpected visitor called. On one occasion an American journalist declared that I left one of the great towns in a huff because the

Press did not give me so much praise as was customary for me to receive elsewhere, which, of course, was absolutely preposterous.

On the next day more journalists came, and they continued to visit me all the time I remained in London. Sometimes they wanted to know if I thought the English people were good judges of music; sometimes they wanted an appreciation or a criticism of another great singer, of Caruso, of Patti, of Titta Ruffo, of Samarco, of Clara Butt, of Melba; sometimes they wanted me to say some very foolish things—that all opera ought to be sung in English, that the Premier ought to go to the opera more often, that England could produce as great composers as Italy; sometimes I was asked to edit the musical column of a journal for one week—an invitation I did not accept; sometimes I would be requested to write the story of my life for publication in serial form, or to narrate some of the most extraordinary incidents of my life so that a Tetrazzini film might be prepared.

These and many other varied and ofttimes amusing requests were being constantly made to me. I think every photographer in the West End of London wrote or sent a representative to me with the object of taking my photograph. Most of them were ready to do this without charge. "Why do you want to photograph me without my paying for it?" I asked one of these representatives; and he explained that photographers make it a practice to get as many notables as possible on their

shelves, as pictures of celebrities are frequently required for publication in magazines and picture-papers, which pay very well indeed for them.

But my visitors were not only Pressmen and photographers. Every business in London which was closely or remotely connected with music and the stage attempted to communicate with me either by letter or through a personal representative. If the firm sold music, why then I must surely want to sing some of the music they published, and I could have as many copies as I liked of any work or works that I chose to select from their list.

"But I don't want any new music," I protested to one caller who was begging me to accept a copy of some new score. "There is more in the old operas than I shall ever be able to sing."

"Perhaps so," he answered, "but all great singers sing some of the new English ballads. You cannot please the English people for long unless you sing them something in their own language."

"It is very good of you to take all this trouble to come here to bring me music for nothing. Why do you do this?" I asked him.

"Oh, partly for your benefit, signora," he replied, very naively, it seemed, "and partly for the sake of my firm. Of course, if you sing this new song, all the people will talk about it, and then they will want to sing it too. That will make our song sell by hundreds of thousands, which will be very good business!"

I thanked him, and dozens more who came on

similar errands, but I did not sing his song. If I had accepted only a few of those that were proffered me, and spent my time practising them, I should have had no time left to do anything else. Some of the music publishers made me monetary offers conditional on my singing some of the new compositions, but I did not close with any of them.

On the occasion of my last visit to London—in October, 1920—there was thrust into my hand as I was entering the stage door at the Royal Albert Hall a sheaf of new songs published by a certain house. A note attached expressed the hope that I might, if not on that occasion, then on some future date, sing one or more of these in public. If and when I did so, the business house would be prepared to pay me a certain sum of money. At the bottom of the letter there was a footnote suggesting that I might like to sing one of the new songs by way of an encore that afternoon—which did not give me much time by way of preparation. Though I could not help respecting the business enterprise of the music publishers, I must say that none of this music gave me a thrill at all comparable with that which I felt when I hurried away to the conservatoire with the stolen copy of Verdi's new opera, *Otello*.

Then there were the firms that sold voice pastilles, cures for colds, creams to preserve and beautify the complexion, and dozens of other things essential to modern life. My morning post

brought me samples innumerable of an infinite variety of preparations, all of which I was assured might be used by me in any quantity without cost to myself. Did I smoke?—which I do not—then I could have as many of a certain variety of cigarettes as I chose to order. They would be sent to my address in any part of the world. The firm would, in return, be grateful for a line from me stating my opinion of their goods. If I had accepted the same and sent the required testimonial, there would soon have appeared blatant advertisements announcing to the world that Tetrazzini's favorite smoke was So-and-so's hand-cut Virginia. As I have said, I do not smoke, and have always advised anyone who would retain a good voice to avoid the habit.

As with the tobacco firm, so with the other business houses. The voice pastilles that were sent me I did not use, nor did I accept the cures for the various ills, real and imaginary, which found a way into my room. I verily believe that if I had agreed to the propositions that were made to me by business houses at that time my name and photograph would have figured in most of the advertisements of that day. A journalist who was in my room at the time when one of these samples arrived uged me to fall in with the firm's suggestion, and argued that it would be very helpful to me as a public singer to obtain the free advertisement which this firm was proposing to give me.

To him, apparently, a prima donna was on the same level as a mannequin.

Among the others who called on me at all hours of the day and night during that memorable first week after my London début were, of course, the inevitable dressmakers. If I were to appear at any private or public concert—and I appeared at many—the dressmakers would be only too happy, they said, to supply me with a dress suitable to the occasion. And so the days passed. From morning to night I was given no peace. All day my head was in a whirl through the attentions of persons I had not asked to call. On most nights I went to bed with a headache only to awaken to be greeted with a further flood of correspondence and to receive, or with difficulty avoid, a succession of callers.

The most interesting of my visitors on the Monday morning which followed my first appearance at Covent Garden were the representatives of the numerous talking machine companies which have their offices and works in and around the British capital. Until this time my voice had not been recorded for the talking machine. On more than one occasion I had been approached by one or another of the talking machine firms with a view to having my voice recorded, but I had hitherto declined, for two reasons: one, that the talking machine was at first so imperfect a musical instrument—there was too much of the tin can and ragtime about its reproduction; and, two, that the remuneration

offered me was so low that I did not consider it worth my while to give the necessary time to it.

Let me say here how astonished I have been by the great improvements made in the talking machine, which is now unquestionably capable of exquisitely reproducing high-grade music. I have one in each of my homes in Italy, and I find it a delightful entertainer as well as a very serviceable instructor. I have records, by all the well-known artists, of every one of the operas and ballads which I sing. I constantly try these records over and listen intently for the faults of the artists, and try to profit by their mistakes. I also try over my own records and find that this practice helps me considerably in the task of keeping my voice in perfect condition.

In a few days I came to a decision as to which was the best company to record my voice and signed a contract with the Victor Talking Machine Company, for whom I have recorded exclusively ever since.

It was about this time that I entered into my first contract with the famous impresario, Oscar Hammerstein. His New York venture was then doing very badly owing to the opposition of the Metropolitan Opera House, which had secured the great Caruso as its foremost star. The news of my London success was cabled to New York, and Mr. Hammerstein came hurrying over to secure me for his own opera house at the earliest possible date. That he was coming he made known to me

by cable, and I held over all other offers from transatlantic impresarios until he arrived.

English impresarios also called on me at this time to urge me to undertake tours of the British provinces and of the British Empire. But I did not sign any contracts other than that with the Victor Talking Machine Company and another with Covent Garden, as I had been advised to be cautious and to wait until the biggest offers came along. Mr. Higgins was at this time—as I heard him say afterward—in a difficult position. He had brought me to London, against his own wish, a singer who had made an almost unprecedented stir, even for Covent Garden. And he had allowed me to arouse the British public without previously securing a hold on my services for a term of years. But Mr. Higgins, who is a very keen business man as well as a good judge of a singer and a production, took very speedy steps to put himself in a better position. It was not long after my début that he was trying to negotiate a further agreement with me. I signed a contract for a further three seasons at Covent Garden. But the salary I agreed to accept was considerably higher than that I was then receiving. I was to get £160 a performance the first year and £180 a performance during the next two years.

I received many invitations at this time to be a guest or to sing at West End parties, some of which I accepted, and soon I began to know the West End of London and many of its titled and

distinguished residents. I remember one afternoon being driven past Covent Garden when I saw a long line of people waiting in a queue. Some were seated on folding chairs which they had brought with them from their homes.

"Look, signora! All these people are waiting to hear you sing tonight! Some people have been here since dawn this morning." It was my friend who spoke. The sight astonished me, for it was then no later than two-thirty. I felt very sorry for the poor people who had to wait all that time to hear me sing. But I also felt very happy that I had been able to arouse such enthusiasm in phlegmatic London.

"This is what used to happen in the days of Jenny Lind and when Patti first began to sing at Covent Garden," my companion, a veteran operagoer, explained.

"It makes me feel so happy," I replied, "that I think I should like to sing to this queue from the cab windows."

With that I made a motion to pull down the window and stop the cab. My friend laid a restraining hand on my arm.

"Surely, Tetrazzini, you know better than that!" she exclaimed. "If you were to do that here in the London streets you would be mobbed. Remember what happened to you in Rio de Janiero and Buenos Aires. These people would enjoy one song, but they would surround the cab and want souvenirs and demand to shake hands. By the

time you could free yourself you would feel unfit for singing again tonight. You must also remember that you have only appeared once; it would never do for you to make a bad impression inside the house on the second night of your appearance."

"But these are English people; they don't demonstrate in the streets, I am told," was my reply. Then my friend told me the story of how on one occasion Patti had been mobbed by her admirers in the streets of London and had to seek refuge in a strange house. The shock of the incident had prevented her from singing for several days. Though I would have enjoyed giving Londoners an impromptu concert in the open air, I took my friend's advice and held myself in reserve for the evening's performance. There was another objection to singing to the queue which I had overlooked at the time—the effect on the Covent Garden management. According to my contract I was prevented from singing anywhere else in England without permission of the Covent Garden Syndicate, during the period covered by the ten performances for which I had been engaged.

On my return to my hotel I learned that all the seats for this, my second performance, had been sold out early on the previous Monday morning, and that wealthy people were offering fancy prices to the fortunate ticket-holders to part with their seats. One enterprising concert agency had attempted to purchase outright from Covent Gar-

den all the seating accommodation for my remaining eight performances. The evening newspaper which was brought up to me at tea-time contained a long description of the scenes at the opera house. Such things, they said, had not been witnessed at any ordinary performance at Covent Garden for a generation. Though I had achieved success on the first night, this description of what was happening in and around the opera house slightly unnerved me for my second appearance. But something was to happen at Covent Garden that night which, had I read of it beforehand, would have excited me still more and probably have prevented me from appearing at all.

CHAPTER XIV

PATTI'S SMILE

ONE of the myriads of newspaper readers who saw me described as "the new Patti" was the great Patti herself. News of my success quickly penetrated to her castle of Craig-y-nos, a beautiful but lonely dwelling hidden away among the Welsh mountains. I have met some *prime donne* and have heard of others who have become so convinced of their own pre-eminence that they will neither discuss nor go to hear a new singer, however great the reputation achieved by the newcomer. It was not so with Patti. It is not so with any truly great artist.

Greatness has no place and no time for envy and jealousy. Why should a glorious singer, a master sculptor, a great painter, feel piqued to learn that another luminary has entered and is brightly shining in his cobalt sky? When our astronomers discover a new star in the heavens, no one says that the star is not wanted. The heavens are vast, and a few million more stars would make but little apparent difference. There is no danger of overcrowding. Nor is there any reason to fear a surplus of divine songsters and songstresses on our globe. Far from it.

There are, alas! too few great voices to meet the public demand to hear them. More and better music and more and better music-makers are at the top of the list of Mother Earth's most pressing needs.

Is there any other art which exercises such a beneficial influence on mankind? This world of harsh noises and harsher experiences would soon become unendurable but for the soothing influences of music in its various forms, especially the unrivalled music of the human voice. How many millions, I wonder, have been encouraged to carry on in the most trying circumstances through the uplifting and stimulating influence of song? If I were ever to feel envious of another diva, the feeling would soon be dissipated by a brief reflection upon the majestic nature of our calling. We are the music-makers, the media through whom our fellow-creatures touch the celestial plane while yet on earth. They ascend with our voices to the lofty regions above the tree-tops, to the pure and rarefied atmosphere of the mountain-peaks, to magical spheres of which we only have the key. Millions want to enter those ethereal regions, but the gates are few, many are small, the total is insufficient to admit all comers to those realms of earthly bliss. Then why should we who hold the keys of the main entrance feel resentment at hearing that a new and broad gateway has been unlocked to the clamorous public? We should be joyful, and not envious. Patti regarded her gifts as the keys where-

with to admit the world to the garden of beautiful sound. Patti was too great to harbor any petty jealousy when she read at her breakfast table in the Welsh mountains the glowing descriptions of my London début. She immediately decided to hasten to London to hear for herself if what the critics said were true. Of course, I had no knowledge that she intended to be present at Covent Garden on Thursday, November 7, 1907. It was not until a few minutes before the curtain rose that someone hurried to my dressing-room exclaiming, "Signora, Patti's here." In my excitement I sprang to my feet, with the result that my hair, which my maid was in the habit of adjusting, was badly disarranged.

"Are you sure?" I said incredulously.

"Yes, signora, quite sure. We all know Patti at Covent Garden. She is in the second row of the stalls."

My informant pointed out the exact position, so that I should have no difficulty in discovering Patti as I went on. To describe my feelings at that moment is almost impossible. My heart sank. For the moment I seemed to lose control of my body. "Oh, I cannot sing to Patti," I exclaimed. "It would be too presumptuous."

My sensations on entering that night were such as I do not ever wish to repeat. It was difficult on the previous Saturday, when I made my first bow to London in a hall a quarter full. It was far worse on this, the second night. "Everybody has

called me the new Patti, and half London has tried to gain admission tonight to see and hear for themselves. Added to that, Patti herself in the stalls. And I have to prove to London and to Patti that what has been said of me is true. I cannot do it!"

Such were my thoughts and utterances as I was about to enter. The next day the newspapers stated that I seemed to be over-nervous during the first few minutes. Can it be doubted? Does anyone express surprise that it was so? Who would not have felt nervous and abashed in those jumpy circumstances? The house was crowded in every part; extra stalls had been introduced in the front of the house; and at the back of the amphitheatre and of all the other sections was a dense crowd of persons who seemed content to stand throughout the whole performance. What a change from the frigid scene which had met my eyes when I first "walked on" only a few nights before! Society was there in force; diamonds sparkled in boxes and stalls. Dukes, marquesses, viscounts, barons and their ladies were pointed out to me by the management, who were at the pinnacle of delight over the size and personnel of the house.

I was pleased to observe so many persons representative of rank, fashion and wealth, but there was one person who to me was of more interest than all the English nobility. She who had thrilled two generations from the boards of Covent Garden was present to hear me sing. During that

storm of applause which greeted my appearance I had eyes only for her. Would she bow to me? Would she give me any encouragement, I wondered? I saw her immediately I entered. No one who had seen a photograph of Patti could mistake that slight, charming figure attired in an exquisite evening dress which became her admirably. Her eyes, dark, beautiful and kindly, met mine. I bowed, and she replied with a pretty little bow and the sweetest smile that I have even seen on the face of a professional singer. It was a smile of welcome, of encouragement. I read in that smile a message which said: "Don't be afraid. I am here to give you my benediction, not to criticize you. Triumph again, and I shall rejoice with you in your triumph." I could have taken that sweet "little lady" to my arms and hugged her to my heart for her encouragement at that supreme moment.

Supported by the smile of Patti, I repeated the part of Violetta in *Traviata* amid scenes of the wildest enthusiasm. There were very few bouquets tendered me on the previous Saturday; the audience had not come in the expectation of finding a prima donna whom they would wish to honor in this way. True, many were sent to me at my hotel on the following Monday. But this second night! Everyone seemed to have brought flowers. They descended on me in showers. Soon one side of the stage was banked with blooms, and still they came. It was a wonderful experience.

And down there in the stalls was the great Patti heartily joining in the torrential applause. The next day the Press were more enthusiastic than they had been on the previous Sunday and Monday, as will be seen from the following, selected at random from a bunch of newspaper cuttings dated November 8, 1907. It is an extract from the *Standard:*

"Emphatic and instantaneous as was the success of Mme. Tetrazzini on Saturday evening," said the writer, "her wonderful triumph was not made fully manifest until last night, when, on her second appearance as Violetta in Verdi's familiar *La Traviata,* an audience of almost unprecedented size and enthusiasm was drawn to Covent Garden."

The writer made reference to a little confusion which had taken place outside the opera house early in the afternoon.

"Crowds began to assemble for the evening performance," he wrote, "at the same time as those who were seeking admission to the usual matinée, and it took a great deal of management to separate the people into two sections. The same difficulty occurred at the close of the performance of *Carmen,* when a division had to be made to allow the afternoon's audience to pass out of the door.

"Before the curtain rose, a quarter of an hour earlier than is usual with this particular opera, the house presented a wonderful appearance. The usual society supporters were in full force in the boxes, and only the royal box was without an occupant. Many of

the regular habitués found themselves forestalled by the general public, who had quickly taken up the stalls and the other reserved seats. In spite of extra rows of stalls which had hastily been brought out from their summer recess, a large number of people were gladly content to stand."

The writer then described my nervousness at the opening of the performance, but he was not aware that the chief cause was the presence there of Patti.

"At first," said the writer, "Mme. Tetrazzini, the heroine of the evening that will long be remembered, seemed a little overcome at the ordeal she had to face. But she is no novice—although the importance of her success naturally affected so sensitive an artist—and after the first few notes her magnificent voice, so bird-like in its absolute purity, rang out with even more marked a fullness and greater richness of tone. Once again she electrified the audience with the dramatic significance she infused into the famous air *Ah! fors' è lui.* There is, as is well known, a dramatic pause in the two sections of this number and this was seized upon by the audience for a spontaneous outburst of applause. Mme. Tetrazzini gathered strength, as it were, by this slight interruption and finished the air with exceptional grace and abandon. Once again were the dramatic touches, the nervous, almost hysterical, restlessness by which she indicates so subtly her growing love for Alfredo, added with a sure skill and lack of exaggeration. Once again did she end the song with a top E flat of surpassing purity, and with the greatest ease, making her exit in a most natural way. Little wonder was it that she was called and recalled

until she came on at last alone to receive the warmest admiration that has been meted out to a newcomer—at least within the memory of the present generation."

That my reception was the warmest given in London to any new prima donna for a generation was the burden of many other newspaper comments of that morning. The *Standard* critic proceeded:

"Through the next act, the excitement of the house settled down into a quiet appreciation. Mme. Tetrazzini held her audience spellbound by the tenderness with which she played the moving and pathetic scene with her lover's father. There were tears in her voice when she decides to give Alfredo up, so that he may marry as his parents desire; and there were many ladies in the audience who were obviously moved by the real pathos of this incomparable artist's acting. Continuing with unabated freshness and vitality, Mme. Tetrazzini thrilled her hearers in the wonderfully effective ballroom scene, where she receives the insults heaped upon her by the lover whom she has so generously released. With all this succession of moments of dramatic intensity, in which the strength of her acting was allied to the utmost human charm of voice, it remained to Mme. Tetrazzini to achieve her greatest climax by the infinite pathos of her death scene. Here was the broken-down woman of the world, the discarded mistress, the real woman, whose sweet nature seemed to be unspoiled by all that she had gone through, revealed with consummate art. The artificiality of the scene faded into the background, and, as was pointed out when dealing with her interpretation on the occasion of her début, the full strength of

Verdi's musical setting of *La Dame aux Camélias* was brought out in a way that can only be described as a revelation.

"Nothing remains to be said of the triumph of this artist save that her performance literally carried the audience away. It was not only by the purity of her singing, but by the real strength of her operatic conception, at once individual and legitimately artistic, that her success was gained. One has often heard of the glorious voices of opera singers of the old days. It is delightful to know that a star of great magnitude has arrived who will not merely shed her radiance upon the remainder of the present season, but who will charm us in the future."

This remarkable article concluded with the following:

"Mme. Tetrazzini will sing *Violetta* again on Tuesday next, and already seats for that night are at a premium. Owing to arrangements made some time ago, she will only be able to appear in one other rôle, that of Lucia, but it is good to know that there yet remain eight more opportunities for the music lovers of London to hear during the present season a singer of the rarest gifts, one who combines a voice of the greatest natural beauty with dramatic abilities that mark her as a prima donna of quite exceptional merit."

Other newspapers gave other points which I may be excused for quoting to make this narrative more complete.

"Nothing succeeds like success," said the *Daily Telegraph,* which then gave this picturesque descrip-

tion of the scene outside Covent Garden. "The Tetrazzini boom has eclipsed even the excitement attendant on *The Christian,* which is saying a good deal. On the day the new prima donna was announced to appear at Covent Garden for the second time, the public, which could not afford to book seats and would have discovered no seats to book if they could have, commenced to form up on the stairs of the unreserved parts of the theatre before noon, armed with a mixed collection of refreshments combining the necessary ingredients of lunch, tea and dinner. As the afternoon wore on, the concourse swelled to enormous proportions and the folk arriving about four o'clock—pluming themselves on their early-bird instincts—were amazed to find that their chances of obtaining admission were hopeless. Tetrazzini has lent distinction to a season conducted with great pluck and enterprise."

The *Daily Mail,* still adhering to the headline "The New Patti," announced that:

"At the early hour of two o'clock yesterday afternoon a little coterie of some thirty people equipped with camp stools was in waiting outside the gallery and amphitheatre doors at Covent Garden to hear the great Tetrazzini in *La Traviata.* They had six hours to wait, and the afternoon was chill and dismal; but this seemed to trouble them little. Their reward was great, for 'La Tetrazzini,' although nervous at the outset, surpassed herself, and sang the music of 'Violetta' with all the brilliance and pathos for which she has already made herself famous.

"The house, as was only to be expected, was literally packed to overflowing, but many late comers interfered materially with the enjoyment of the opening scenes. Mme. Tetrazzini's first recitatives, therefore, passed

almost unnoticed, and it was not until she commenced the famous *Ah! fors' è lui* that the audience really settled down to the enjoyment of her superb singing. And superb it was from this point; never has a more exquisite rendering of the music been heard at Covent Garden.

"'La Tetrazzini,' as she has come to be called, sings the most arduous and florid vocal passages with an ease and absence of effort we have rarely, if ever, heard equalled. The packed house listened breathless until the final trill on the E in alt, and then the flood gates were loosed. The new diva had six recalls when the curtain fell. For the first three she brought on Signor Carpi (the Alfredo) with her, but the latter generously recognized that the demonstration was Violetta's alone on this occasion, and declined to accompany her after this. 'La Tetrazzini' consequently 'took the call' alone, and was received with a veritable tempest of applause.

"It fully cemented her triumph of last Saturday, and placed her upon the topmost pinnacle of Covent Garden operatic *prime donne.*"

Though the newspaper comments were very flattering, there was one sequel to that night's performance which was more flattering still. Early next morning there arrived at my hotel a little *billet doux.* It was in the handwriting of Patti. In it she congratulated me upon the success of the performance and asked if I would be so good as to take lunch with her that day at the Carlton Hotel. Naturally I was jubilant at receiving this invitation and accepted immediately. I found that Patti was occupying a special suite of rooms at the hotel.

She received me very graciously and was exceedingly generous in her complimentary remarks upon my singing. The "little lady" was neatly dressed in black silk and there was not even a thread of silver in her dark brown hair. She was very unaffected and yet she bore herself with a queenly dignity and a sweet amiableness that impressed me deeply. But I did draw her attention to an interview with her which had appeared in one newspaper. In that interview Patti had admitted that she agreed with what the Press were saying. I asked Patti if that interview were authentic, and she gladly declared that it was. She added that on several occasions she had heard rising artists described as the new Patti, but that it was only in my case that she had been able to agree with a description of that nature. At that time I had not heard her sing, and I felt a great desire to ask her to go to the piano and sing for my benefit one of her old favorites, *Comin' through the Rye* or *Home, Sweet Home.* Yet I had not the courage to ask, and my great little hostess did not offer to do so. At this time, of course, Patti was well past sixty. Yet I was subsequently to hear her sing once before death snatched her from the world in which she reigned so long. Her voice, even at that late hour of her life, was still of exceptional power, sweetness and purity. I heard it with deep pleasure and deeper sorrow. To me it seemed a terrible tragedy that our Queen of Song was nearing the end of her allotted life. I still dwell on the scene

in the Carlton Hotel that day when I was the guest of Patti and some of her countless friends. I recall the dignified but generous welcome she extended me; I remember the sweetness of her smile; the genuineness of that little handshake of hers and our talk over her past triumphs and my triumph of yesterday.

I think I was more impressed by the nobility of the character of the "little lady," who was so ready to admit without qualification that her mantle had fallen on me, than I was by the flattering declaration that she had made. I left the Carlton that day feeling very happy. It was the greatest day of my life.

An incident that occurred not long after this made me feel very sad and sick at heart. The night that I was singing to a crowded house in Covent Garden had been fixed for a concert at which Patti made one of her rare appearances. I felt a great desire to plead illness and not to appear at Covent Garden that night so that I could lose myself in the audience which would attend on Patti. Next day I greatly regretted not having done so, for one of the newspapers had vulgarly contrasted the numbers present at my performance with those who had gone to hear Madame Patti. The article was to the effect that "the new Patti" was now a greater draw than the old. Dear Patti! I hope she never saw that article. Even if she did I think she was too great an artist as well as too noble a soul to feel hurt by it. In any case, it had an effect

upon our friendship. I have many letters from her at my home in Rome, in each of which she familiarly addresses me as "My dearest Luisa."

Patti was a frequent visitor at Covent Garden during my seasons there. And whenever I caught her gaze she always answered with her sweet and appreciative smile. Sometimes she would go farther than this and would go back to her hotel and write me one of those impulsive and heartening letters which were characteristic of her. The following, written in Patti's own handwriting, in which she declares that my singing literally made her weep, I have treasured most carefully. It reached me on the evening of May 1, 1908, the day after the opening of the grand opera season at Covent Garden in which I had again appeared as Violetta in *Traviata*. This is the letter:

Carlton Hotel, London,
May 1st, 1908.

My Dear Madame Tetrazzini:

Bravo! Bravo! and again *Bravo!* I cannot tell you how much pleasure it gave me to hear you last night, and what a joy it was to me to hear your beautiful Italian phrasing, and how immensely touched I was by the wonderful feeling and pathos of your voice. You made me cry in the last act. I should like also to add that in addition to the phenomenal brilliancy and purity of your high notes, your beautiful method, your phrasing, the ease and flexibility of your voice and your acting, all gave me the very greatest pleasure, and I shall take the first opportunity of going to hear you again.

I *heartily* rejoice in your well-deserved triumph—Bravo! Bravo! And again Bravo!

Yours sincerely,

ADELINA PATTI CEDERSTROM.

What a wonderful letter! At my homes in Italy I have countless souvenirs of my public appearances in all parts of the world. I cherish them all. Each links the present with some delightful experience of the past. I would not willingly part with one of these souvenirs. And the one which I prize most of all is this letter from my illustrious compatriot, Patti. Praise from a mixed audience is very gratifying after one has given it of her best. But praise, and such praise, from Patti, is far more than the passing pleasure of a public ovation. I treasure it as a peasant maid would treasure a *billet doux* from a Royal lover. It is a sacred missive!

CHAPTER XV

MY CLASSIC FIGHT WITH HAMMERSTEIN

AFTER London—New York!

To give a description of the scenes at the remaining eight performances at Covent Garden in the autumn of 1907 would be but to repeat what I have written of my second appearance there. Every time I appeared the house was crowded, and greater crowds were turned away. The only difference seemed to be that those who could not afford to book seats had to "queue up" earlier than ever. Instead of arriving at midday, they used to appear outside the opera house immediately after breakfast. On one occasion a little group was in position before daybreak.

I have always sympathized with the opera queues and have occasionally protested to various managements against the practice, and I have yet to hear a satisfactory objection to advance booking for the gallery and other cheap parts. It may be a good advertisement of the talents of an artist or the quality of a production to compel impecunious persons to wait in all weathers outside a theatre for ten or twelve hours, but it is, to say the least, bad for the health of these persons of both sexes whose love of great art makes them despise all

physical discomforts and fatigue. To most of us, congenial circumstances are necessary to the enjoyment of the arts; those who can enjoy while enduring always arouse in me unbounded admiration.

When my ten operatic performances at Covent Garden were ended the authorities did something which, I am informed, they had not done before or since. They gave half a dozen orchestral concerts, at which I was the star singer. Each of these concerts was an astonishing success. There was a good deal of talk in the English Press that I had been secured for England during the next four years, and that, consequently, America would not see me during this time. Which talk was very far from the truth. In accordance with the new contract, I returned to England for the grand opera at Covent Garden in 1908, but later in the year I embarked for New York. Though an incompetent impresario had, some years before, attempted to secure me for the Metropolitan, nothing sufficiently attractive had been offered me, so this was my first visit as a prima donna to America's principal city. Before leaving England I had abundant evidence that I was now famous in New York through my work in London, but I did not know that I was to be regarded as a being more exalted than just a successful prima donna. Yet it was so. My advent was being eagerly awaited by Oscar Hammerstein and the whole opera company and employees at the Manhattan Opera

House. They were looking to me as the bringer of fortune to the Manhattan and all connected with it at a critical period in its life. Its controller, Mr. Oscar Hammerstein, had the makings of a genius, but he had many of the failings common to great men. He wanted to be a Napoleon in the realm of opera. He was not content to put his own opera house on a paying basis; he must go further and stamp under his foot any rival. Of the outcome of his many designs and activities, all interested in opera are already aware. Potential Napoleons—whether their activities are devoted to vanquishing peoples or only business rivals—have an uninspiring habit of ending their days in obscurity in St. Helena. All their achievements seem small when contrasted with their great failures. Hammerstein, as the world knows, was swallowed by his rival, the Metropolitan. Thinking to take London by storm, he came to England and built a beautiful opera theatre—the London Opera House. Covent Garden was to be knocked out in a single round. But he soon found, as many another American has found, that old English institutions do not collapse so readily. In London he did not even achieve the doubtful success of being bought out by his rival. London would not have Oscar Hammerstein or his beautiful opera house; and so the Napoleon of the opera returned to America and the estate agent put the "House to Let" notice outside his derelict theatre. What his artistic soul must have undergone when he learned

that it again failed—this time as a circus and menagerie—and that it subsequently succeeded as a cinema, only another musical Napoleon could really appreciate. At the time of my arrival in New York, Oscar Hammerstein was suffering from the great popularity of Caruso. Italy's great tenor was the luminary at the Metropolitan, and none of Hammerstein's efforts would induce him to cross over to the Manhattan. Caruso was drawing the crowds; the Manhattan was not doing so well. As I had been instrumental in turning an unfortunate Covent Garden season into an unqualified success, so, in Hammerstein's opinion, I was destined to change the fortunes of the Manhattan. But Hammerstein was soon to discover that it is one thing to be successful and another thing to bring about the downfall of a rival.

My arrival in New York was to me, as to the Manhattan, an event of the first importance. A year ago I had reached London unheralded and unknown. Here it was different. I found New York had been aroused to fever heat over my coming. Whatever his failings, Hammerstein was a good showman. His Press agents had filled the American newspapers with articles all eulogistic of my powers. He went farther and infused his company with some of his own enthusiasm for me. And so, when I landed in America, I found to my great surprise that all who had anything to do with the Manhattan had come down to the ship to greet me.

"Here is Oscar Hammerstein himself," said my

own manager, as he pointed to a dapper figure with pointed beard and silk hat that was hustling in my direction. Hammerstein came and saluted me. With him was Mary Garden, the famous American prima donna, carrying a glorious bouquet of exotic flowers. Near by were all the other members of the company. They all pressed round me, shook my hand, and cheered me as though I were their President, or at least one of their champion boxers or baseball players. Their excitement was not without some justification, for I found that the seats had been sold for every performance at which I was to sing at the Manhattan for the next three weeks. What was more, Oscar Hammerstein had achieved the dream of his life: he had induced the famous four hundred millionaires of New York who had hitherto exclusively patronized the Metropolitan to engage boxes and stalls at the Manhattan. I am afraid the sight of those "four hundred" in his opera house on the first night I sang there must have turned Hammerstein's head completely. It was then that he probably first decided to be a Napoleon of the operatic world. He thought that the boom would last forever, that as he had been the first impresario to present me to New York, he would always be able to retain me as one of his "songbirds." I really believe that he thought Caruso would cease to be a pull.

As it happened, the Metropolitan was not crushed. Caruso sang there on different nights from those on which I sang at the Manhattan, with

the result that instead of one theatre doing well and the other doing badly, both Metropolitan and Manhattan had a prosperous season. The Manhattan did so well that Hammerstein could afford to pay me the $2,500 nightly stipulated in my contract. This figure I may say was fixed by myself, for when I was first invited to the Manhattan I was offered a blank sheet and told to write on it the amount I wanted for each performance, being assured that whatever I asked would be agreed to. And I filled in $2,500, which was nearly five times the amount then being paid me for singing at Covent Garden. This was the highest salary which had ever been paid in New York to a prima donna for a season in grand opera. Caruso at that time was earning, I believe, $2,000 a performance. The salary which Caruso received was mentioned to me privately at the Metropolitan Opera House some time after this; it was when the directors were giving a series of six gala performances. Gatti-Casazza, the director, asked me what my fee would be for each of these performances, and I replied that I should want $2,500.

"But we are paying Caruso two thousand," replied he. "If the great tenor knows that we pay you two thousand five hundred, he will want the same." I held out for the figure I had named, and Gatti-Casazza gave way. He made one condition, however, which I had to agree to: that I must not tell Signor Caruso the actual amount I was receiving. Whether Caruso ever did ask anyone else

what I received, I cannot say. Although I saw much of our great tenor after those days of mine in New York, I ever found him as unaffected as he was great. Never did I hear him say an ill word of another member of my profession. Whenever I was at the Metropolitan, Caruso always came to the stage to see me, and invariably extended to me a kindly welcome.

There is no need to give many details of those successful three seasons I spent with Hammerstein. My second season with Hammerstein was notable in one respect. When singing in London I had met John McCormack, the Irish tenor with the God-given voice. I found that his rich voice went so well with mine that I took him back with me to America, and he sang with me both in New York and in the other big towns when the Hammerstein company went on tour. The Americans took John McCormack to their heart, and the Irish tenor took to America. He has made a fortune here, has become naturalized, and has settled down in Connecticut. The voice of John McCormack is one of the most delightful that I have ever heard. It has color, tone and a rich Irish flavor which ensures a ready response wherever it is heard. The Ameicans, to use one of their own phrases, "just love it."

In writing of tenors I am reminded of a saying by Madame Calvé, the famous Carmen, to a New York journalist at the time when she sang with me in America. "What do you think of popular

tenors?" asked the journalist. "They have no vigor," replied Calvé, speaking somewhat contemptuously. "They do not put their whole soul into their singing. All my life I have been expecting to play with a tenor who would so lose himself in his part that he would throw me over into the orchestra. But," she lamented, "not one has ever done it."

For three years Hammerstein acted as my impresario. The newspapers were always ready to refer to me as his "favorite songbird," his star of stars. They discovered that he invariably met me on the boat on my return from Europe, but that he did not take the trouble to go down to greet others, including Mary Garden. Notices such as the following were always appearing in the American Press:

> "A vision in chinchilla, with turban, long coat and little boots, all of this fur, Tetrazzini —Oscar Hammerstein's star of stars—arrived on the Cunard liner *Campania* today. Mr. Hammerstein was at the dock to meet her, and with true Continental politeness implanted a resounding kiss of welcome on each cheek of the singer."

In such vivid descriptive language the American journalists love to refer to all persons in the public eye. The time came when my friendship with Hammerstein suddenly snapped. The blame un-

questionably was his. The directors of the Metropolitan Opera House bought out Hammerstein and thought they had bought out Tetrazzini as well. My contract was with Hammerstein. He wrote me a letter which contained the amazing news that Napoleon had sold himself to Wellington of the Metropolitan. He told me that I was to consider myself as under the management of the Metropolitan Opera House. The suggestion of my being bought and sold at the will of opera financiers was a bombshell. I felt very indignant and resolved to have none of it. I wrote back to Oscar Hammerstein and told him that nothing was farther from my intentions than to place myself at the bidding of the Metropolitan Opera House. I added that since he had now no intention of carrying out the agreement he had made with me I considered my part of it was ended. If there were to be changes I would make fresh contracts with the persons I thought most fit for my purposes. To this Hammerstein replied that since I would not go to the Metropolitan, I was to consider myself as being still under his management. He said I was to tour the country during the coming season with Orville Harrold, the American tenor, and others. He proposed to send me an advance on my salary and my steamship ticket as well. My reply was a firm refusal. I told Hammerstein that I should not go on tour and should not sing under his management again.

About this time several other impresarios were

striving to secure contracts with me. Mr. Dippel, of the Metropolitan, finding I would not cross over at the dictation of Hammerstein, endeavored to arrange a contract with me on his own account while I was in London. Though I had not signed with this house, an announcement was made to the effect that I had done so, also stating that as there was no competition, my own salary and that of other opera stars would not be so high in future. Other conflicting announcements made at this time —the summer of 1910—without my authority, were that I had made it up with Hammerstein, that I was going on concert tour of the United States, that I would never again sing in America without the consent either of Hammerstein or the Metropolitan or both.

"A great question seems to be receiving less attention than it deserves," said the *San Francisco Chronicle* in August, 1910. "Will Tetrazzini sing again in America, or will she not? Oscar Hammerstein says she won't; our own Doc Leahy says she will. Perhaps Tetrazzini will enlighten us!"

There was considerable pother in the American newspapers at this time. Conflicting statements continued to appear under such headings as: "Why Tetrazzini Will Not Appear in Opera in New York," "Herr Dippel's Fiat Angered Tetrazzini," "Tetrazzini Still Hammerstein's Star," "Tetrazzini Feels Herself Slighted," "Hammerstein and Leahy Both Claim Tetrazzini," "Catching a Songbird for the Opera Lovers: Looks easy, but see

what it takes to sign up Tetrazzini," and so on.

Musical America wrote: "I wish Tetrazzini would sign up a contract with somebody and have it published in all the papers. We are getting positively dizzy trying to find out what she is going to do and whom she will have for a manager next winter."

The truth of the situation as to Hammerstein I have already explained. The new position briefly was this: Early in May, 1910, Mr. Dippel, together with Arthur Hammerstein, the son of the great Oscar, were in London. They visited me and drew up a contract agreeable to both parties. Then Mr. Dippel stated that he had no power to sign the contract, but must return to America to secure the consent of all the directors. He asked for an option which would give him time to go back to America to get this done. I gave the option. To my surprise, instead of getting a definite reply I received a number of propositions from various persons, none of whom had authority to sign a contract. When Mr. Dippel returned to London in July he wrote to me asking if I would see him as there were one or two things he wanted to say to me which he could not put into writing. In view of what had passed and the general dilatoriness of the Metropolitan management, I declined to see him or to have anything more to do at that time with what was virtually a concert and operatic trust. My reason for defying Hammerstein also, and booking up with an impresario from San

Francisco, is made plain in a spirited article which, published at that time in the *San Francisco Argonaut,* was taken up and republished everywhere.

"Tetrazzini," said the *Argonaut,* "is coming to sing in San Francisco. After five years of triumphs she is coming back to the threshold of her success bearing the world indorsements of San Francisco's opinion. She is coming to sing with the great Polacco combination—to sing with it only here. San Francisco consequently will have a real opera season this winter, with a really great prima donna, that will be a treat for music lovers and a chance to wear one's very best and have it seen. These things combined constitute an event.

"So that in Tetrazzini's coming back we are assured of an event—we have something to look forward to. A grand opera season always means gaiety and festivity, and so it is an interesting, a welcome and agreeable announcement—but much easier to make than to arrive at.

"Catching songbirds for the opera lovers is no easy matter—there are so few really, truly songbirds and so many opera lovers—and catching this especial coloratura rara avis is particularly difficult, because—well, just because she is Tetrazzini, and being Tetrazzini is swayed by so many reasons besides the potent money reasons. Catching gorillas in the Straits Settlements, and orchids in the tropics, and tortoises on the Galapagos, is a mere trifle compared with catching real operatic songbirds, because once captured the former stay caught, while the songbirds—— For example, in catching Tetrazzini it isn't just the formality of cabling terms and tearing the answer open to read 'Accepted.' That isn't at all the way it's done.

Tetrazzini has been out in a characteristic letter explaining that; a somewhat wrathy letter, denying the assumption that she can be sold like a package of breakfast food, or passed from one manager to another along with the props and the office furniture.

"She has labelled all the reported plans for her coming season as mis-statements, to say the least. She is NOT going to sing for Dippel in Chicago and Philadelphia; she is NOT going to sing for the Metropolitan management in New York; she has NOT signed any contract with operatic managements in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago, where they would like to have Tetrazzini seasons; she is quite positive about what she is NOT going to do—and why? She is not at all pleased that it should be assumed her agreement with Oscar Hammerstein could be passed on to Gatti-Casazza of the Metropolitan management, her voice to be parcelled out at the pleasure of the new manager. She doesn't like to have things done that way, and she has made enough money in the past five years of her triumphs to indulge her whims.

"She is not going to be engaged like a pig in a poke, to be featured so many times in concert and so many times in opera, and then be informed that instead it will suit the manager's convenience to have her so many times in opera and so many times in concert instead. The Dippels, the Casazzas, the Khan and Russells shall not presume to have everything to say in disposing of her. 'I will be consulted; I shall say what I will do,' was her fiat, and she went to London.

"And now comes the authoritative announcement that she has signed with W. H. Leahy of San Francisco—otherwise 'Our Doc' Leahy of the Tivoli, and Tetrazzini's discoverer for the season of 1910-1911—and that the first use of her consent he has made is

to put her on for a brilliant operatic season here this winter.

"I'll wager she signed that contract with 'Doc' Leahy easily and amiably and happily, and while she probably held out for all the money to be got, and more than she'd been getting—as is the way of songbirds—she didn't make any insurmountable difficulty about it, and was amenable to reason, for that would be like Tetrazzini.

"She is a tantalizing bundle of contradictions, warm-hearted, praise-and-pleasure-loving, impulsive, and so far as business exactions go, impatient and irresponsible. She cherishes a great kindness for 'Doc' Leahy because he discovered her; her career and what she calls her good luck started with him and the Tivoli in 1904; she has a fondness for San Francisco and a friendship and admiration for that magnetic, inspiring musician, Polacco, who was the leader of the Tivoli orchestra when she made her triumph here. All these things inclined her to listen attentively to 'Doc' Leahy's offer, while other operatic managers were awaiting her decision—and it pleased her that he should go to London to see her, instead of cabling her. He had recently returned from Milan, where he had been making preparations for an operatic venture, and when he heard that Tetrazzini was 'up in the air,' he ferried across the Atlantic as quickly as he could, and put his inducements before her in London some ten days ago, and as enticingly as he could, while other managers were cabling.

"Tetrazzini has her own pleasant memories of her San Francisco engagements, particularly of her farewell night, which fell on Tuesday, November 7, 1905. She sang from the operas in which she made her successes—*Lucia, Traviata* and *Dinorah,* and the box-office turned away 10,000 ticket buyers, it was claimed,

and it is truth that not another person could have been squeezed into the theatre. Her last curtain here rang down on her singing the *Star-Spangled Banner,* with the audience standing and singing with her, her pure, bird-like tone rising sweet and clear above everything.

"There's a rememberable thrill in memories like this, and Tetrazzini, I've no doubt, was swayed by it—as well as by the advantageous and agreeable terms so shrewd a business man as 'Doc' Leahy would see fit to offer. And it is owing to these things—this complicated conglomeration of persuasive influences—that 'Doc' Leahy got that coveted signature of the temperamental Luisa inscribed in the right place on his contract. Thus, you see, are songbirds captured, and not by a pinch of salt."

Though this writer, like most American journalists, wrote with some levity as well as spirit, there was much that was truth in what was written.

Then there began a legal process which soon developed into a *cause célèbre.* Oscar Hammerstein, hearing that I had decided to go to San Francisco, took legal proceedings to prevent me from doing so. He obtained an order from the Courts to sequester all my luggage and valuables. I was told that I must not even leave New York. American law is very tedious. I do not remember half of what happened. The lawyer came and went, and the case dragged on. The journalists called to see me every day to ask what was going to happen next. I told them that if I were not permitted to sing in San Francisco in accordance with my agreement, rather than accept Oscar Ham-

merstein's altered arrangements I would sing in the streets of New York. "I have to live somehow," I explained to them.

"But would you really sing in the streets—in Broadway, for instance?" they asked.

"Indeed I would!"

"But you are a Hammerstein star. You cannot afford to do that."

"I am no longer a Hammerstein star," I retorted, "and I can't spend all my time living in expensive New York hotels paying lawyers' bills without drawing in some money. And nobody in New York can or shall prevent Tetrazzini from opening her mouth."

Interviews in this vein were frequently appearing in the American Press, with the result that I obtained the biggest free advertisement ever given to a prima donna, not excepting Patti or Jenny Lind.

I did not find it necessary to sing in the streets of New York. A break in the clouds came in the shape of a new order by the Courts which gave me permission to leave New York and to take away my possessions on condition that I deposited $30,000 with the legal authorities. If the protracted legal proceedings ultimately resulted in my favor, I was to get the money back; if in favor of Hammerstein, he would get it. I never saw that money again; it went into Hammerstein's pocket, which at this time was swollen with the monies paid to him by the Metropolitan Opera House. This

$30,000 of mine, with $970,000 more, was sunk in the unfortunate London Opera House and lost.

Though Hammerstein secured $30,000 of my earnings, I do not think I was a loser in the end. The advertisement which the case brought me was worth far more than the money I lost. I estimate the value of the tremendous publicity occasioned by that case at about $500,000. When I reached San Francisco the journalists there swarmed to where I was staying. They all wanted to know whether I was in earnest in saying that I would sing in the streets. I laughingly replied that I was. So the city authorities met and decided to ask me to sing in the big public square in the centre of the town on Christmas Eve, in aid of local charities. I agreed to their request, and there took place the biggest open-air concert, so it was stated, that has ever been held. The number of persons present was estimated at being almost a quarter of a million. All the shops had been shut at nine o'clock to allow of everybody's being present, and everyone in the city seemed to be there that night. Never in my life have I seen such a vast congregation. I stood on a raised dais and looked out on a great multitude of people who, standing shoulder to shoulder, their faces upturned, stretched away until they became blurred and lost to my view. The windows of all the houses were thrown open, and I could see heads and shoulders leaning out. All were anxious to participate

in the greatest concert San Francisco or the world had ever seen.

A colonel in the American Army was there with his regiment, his duty being to assist in maintaining order. During the proceedings the colonel came up to me and said: "Madame Tetrazzini, I do not know your language, but I will speak to you in the language that all the world understands." With that he took my fingers, bent his head, and implanted a kiss on my hand. That colonel, then unknown, has now a world reputation. I read of him and the exploits of the American army during the Great War. He was no longer a colonel; he had become General Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army in France.

A very large sum was collected for the poor at this concert. The city authorities were delighted at its success. One result was that they presented me with the freedom of the city, an honor which has been conferred on me by many other towns during my career. In the centre of this square there is a fountain, and on a column by this fountain there has been placed a bust of myself, which bears this inscription: "Here in 1910 Tetrazzini sang for the poor."

My concert on that Christmas Eve established a precedent. Every year since that time there has been held an open-air Christmas Eve concert in aid of San Francisco's poor. Wherever I happen to be at that time, I send a telegram to the

mayor of the town offering him my best wishes for the success of the event. Within a few days I receive from the mayor a letter telling me what has happened in the old familiar square. Needless to say, I anticipate this letter with great eagerness and read it before any of my other correspondence on the day that it arrives.

And Oscar Hammerstein? I am sorry to have to say that we did not resume friendly relations; but a long time after the Tetrazzini-Hammerstein case had ended I heard through a mutual friend that the impresario would have been willing to return to me the $30,000 if he could again become my manager. When I was on the high seas, returning to America, he died, and so he did not get the opportunity of again becoming my good friend. I do not bear malice to anyone, even if they go to the extreme length of suing me in the courts. Had Hammerstein come to me and asked me to wipe out the past, I should have done it quite readily. I should not have accepted the $30,000 for myself, but I should probably have insisted that he gave it to some deserving cause, as I felt he was not entitled to benefit from a loss by a woman who was earning her living with her voice. On the whole, I feel more sorry for than angry with Hammerstein. Unquestionably he was a very big impresario. His ideas were fine, but some were impossible. He made the colossal mistake of allowing his clear vision to be clouded by the desire to triumph over all others. He had the true artistic

spirit, and if he had devoted himself solely to the furtherance of operatic art he might have accomplished great things. His disasters were due to his desire to be a god. When will men learn that only the humble can hope to become truly great? It is a big thing to build opera houses and to give representations of all the great works of the greatest composers; but it is a poor and mean undertaking to set out with the avowed object of crushing those already performing this uplifting work to the best of their ability. Musical Napoleons are no more necessary than Napoleons who would rule empires. The world wants music to charm and soothe away its cares, not impresarios seeking to be gods.

CHAPTER XVI

WELCOMED AT THE WHITE HOUSE

SEVERAL years before I first sang at the Manhattan Opera House I met Heinrich Conreid, of the Metropolitan Opera House, at the time when the Metropolitan, as now, was the Mecca of all American music lovers and the goal of every international artist. Conreid made me an offer, and I agreed to sing for him. Two copies were made of the contract, one in English, and the other in French.

I found later that there was a discrepancy between the figures appearing in these two documents—how it came about I do not suggest—but the result was that I decided not to go to the Metropolitan, but to accept an offer to sing in San Francisco. When the time came for me to sing in San Francisco, Mr. Conreid attempted to prevent me, and sought an injunction in the courts at this town. The judge, I remember, stated that he had bought a box to hear me sing that night, and then, I am glad to say, gave a ruling in my favor.

When I made my début at the Manhattan many of the newspapers criticized Conreid for letting me slip through his fingers. I have a copy of the *Kansas City Star,* which said:

"Two years later Tetrazzini stood before an audience of five thousand persons in New York, the object of a demonstration such as has rarely been accorded an artist on any stage in that city. The walls of Hammerstein's opera house fairly shook. The voices of five thousand persons joined in tumultous 'Bravos.' Twelve rounds of applause brought her before the curtain as many times after the first act of *Traviata.* At the conclusion of the second act the house was on its feet. Up and down went the Hammerstein curtain in ten minutes of cheering and uproar. On this night which witnessed the Tetrazzini success in New York few thought of the two men who had made the one his best and the other his worst guess: one misjudged an artist two years before; the other, Oscar Hammerstein, was sitting in the wings thinking of how, by a wise stroke of business policy, he had bought success for his grand opera venture. There were thirteen thousand real dollars in the box-office, representing one night's receipts, and he, Hammerstein, of the funny silk hat and the wide, flat feet, was resting serenely on the assurance of the many thousands more that were yet to come."

When I returned to New York in 1909 for my second season with Hammerstein at the Manhattan, I had a reception which for enthusiasm equalled all that had been proffered when I first sang to New York in 1908. "All the wealth of enthusiasm," said the *Evening Telegram,* "and babel of acclaim that have greeted Madame Tetrazzini in

the past were a part of the spectacular show last evening at the Manhattan Opera House. She sang in *Traviata*. It would scarcely be necessary, except as a matter of historical record, to say that it was an Italian night. The first outburst of greeting was freighted with comradeship, and it seemed that not less than four-fifths of the audience were bent on telling the smiling little woman just how happy they all were that she was with them again. Up where the true lovers sit below the arches of the dome, Italy prostrated itself at the feet of the silvery-voiced songstress, and intermingled steady murmurs of approval with the ejaculatory and hungry *tus* whenever opportunity offered. No queen ever was served more loyally than Tetrazzini by the lords and ladies of the true lovers."

True lovers of opera, as the writer aptly described my compatriots, would appear in force in every one of the houses at which I sang in America. How glad I was to see them they all knew. If I recognized—as I frequently did—a band of Italians, I always gave them a special bow of greeting. For even in hospitable America were we not all strangers in a strange land? I have many a pleasant recollection of meetings with my compatriots in that great Union of states. Perhaps some went too far in their "hero worship." They wrote me letters—long, effusive letters—couched in the language they might have used in addressing a monarch. Some of my compatriots would allow their appreciation of my singing to

overbalance their sense of fair play, and refuse to hear, or would even hiss, other artists who appeared in the same programme with me. Occasionally I had to appeal to my too zealous compatriots to give fair play to all, for, I said, they were all giving of their best, and deserved appreciation and encouragement, not hoots and hisses.

In Italy I know it is the custom to treat a mediocre singer with scant courtesy and sometimes hiss him, and even her, off the stage. I am thankful that I was never compelled to endure that kind of reception, but my heart has often ached for those unfortunate artists who have been so treated. To sing to a poor house is punishment sufficient, if punishment is at all necessary, without adding to an artist's misery by vulgar abuse. No singer is ever hooted off the concert or operatic platform in England, and for the sake of our great profession and my country, which produces so many composers and singers, I hope this mean practice will soon die out in my beloved homeland.

When I was in Venice on holiday I enjoyed—yes, enjoyed—the sensation of being *nearly* hissed! I met a young acquaintance, a girl who was playing a small part in a comic opera which was then being given in this city. Her rôle was that of a stage-struck girl who, trying to sing in opera, sings so badly that the public hiss her off the stage. My girl friend was admirably suited to the part, for she had a very feeble voice. Unfortunately, the audience objected to her singing off the key, al-

though the author's instructions were that she had to do so. The poor young actress needed money very badly and was in ill health. She was in a dilemma. If she appeared, the audience would be infuriated by her; if she did not, she would starve.

"Don't worry. I'll sing for you for the three evenings they want to give that play," I said to her. "You pretend to sing, but don't make a sound. I will go behind the scenes and sing, and no one in the audience will know." My only difficulty was that I did not want anyone else connected with the theatre to know my identity, so we, my girl friend and I, concocted a pretty story. I was to pose as a young Russian whose family objected to her going on the stage, and I was supposed to be unable to speak more than a little Italian. The arrangements were made, and I went to the rehearsal in my oldest clothes, wearing a thick veil. Nobody paid me any attention until I began to sing, and then they all crowded round me in great excitement. But I couldn't talk to them, as I spoke so little Italian.

The evening of the first performance came, and I sang the big aria from the first act of *Il Trovatore*—only I sang it as I was accustomed to sing it, and did not go off the key. The time came when the old father in the play had to exclaim: "Oh, my child, my child; they are hissing her!" But the stage public had become so entranced with the way I sang this air that they forgot their part—which

was to hiss. Not so the old man. When they did not act on his lines, he began to repeat them:

"Oh, my child——"

"Oh, shut up! Shut up!"

The real public had asserted themselves. Some of them were standing up making angry signs to the old man to cease interrupting. The old man sat down, looking surprised and cowed. I continued singing. At the close of the aria, when the trio comes in, the other two actors forgot even to try to sing, so I *sang the trio alone.* At the end there was frantic applause, and all the artists went out to bow to the real public, the supposed singer among them; but the audience were not so readily deceived.

"No, no!" they shouted. "We want the real prima donna!"

The embarrassed manager came to me and made signs to show that I must go out. This was a development against which I had made no provision, and I tried to hurry off by the wings. But the manager barred my passage and, taking me by the hand, led me to the front. Even though I still wore my veil, I felt certain that someone present would recognize me and startle the building by shouting "Tetrazzini." The audience did shout, but not my name. They shouted to me to remove my veil, and, there being no way of escape, I had to obey. Wonder of wonders! There was no one present who had ever seen me or heard me sing before.

This scene was repeated on the succeeding and final nights, and no one detected that the unknown Russian singer was the well-known Tetrazzini. It is true that the author complained to the manager, his brother, that I wasn't true at all to his comedy —a remark that might also apply to me when singing certain operas, for I like to improvise when I see an opportunity. The author of this comedy had insisted that the girl must sing badly, must get off the key, and must be hissed by the stage public. But the author was not supported in his complaint by his brother, the manager, who only replied: "Look at the box-office receipts; the public flock to my theatre, which has had a unique and cheap boom."

The talented young Russian was obliged to leave the stage of this Venetian playhouse after those three performances, and disappeared from the town. A droll sequel came several years later when I was singing in Buenos Aires. In the principal of the South American theatre I at once recognized the manager of the Venetian comedy theatre. It was not surprising that he failed at first to know in the prima donna named Tetrazzini the mysterious Russian débutante who had caused a minor commotion in his Venetian playhouse; but a few days after we had begun rehearsals he came up to me in a puzzled manner and said:

"I feel sure that I have met you somewhere—perhaps a long time ago. It wasn't in Buenos Aires; it may have been in Italy. And I seem to

recall that the circumstances of our meeting were unusual, though not unpleasant. Am I right? Have I met you before, signora?"

"You have," I replied, laughing heartily. "And what is more, I have sung as one of your artists in your theatre in Venice."

With that he seemed still more mystified. "Tetrazzini, Tetrazzini; I am sure I have never had the honor——" He stopped and looked at me curiously for a moment, and then suddenly burst forth with: "Good heavens! Can it really be true? Were you that mysterious Russian who sang my brother's comedy and disappeared in as strange a way as you came?"

"Yes, I was."

"And to think that I never recognized you! Oh, what a joke. No wonder we had to turn the people away." Then, speaking very sorrowfully, he said: "But what a pity. If we had only known we would have trebled the prices."

The night of November 10, 1909, I well remember, for it was then that I introduced John McCormack to New York. I have already mentioned how impressed I had been with his glorious voice when he sang with me at Covent Garden, and I was greatly pleased, as well as amused, when I read some of the newspaper accounts of his début in New York. "That Mr. McCormack is a decided acquisition to the company is undoubted," said the *New York Evening Post*. "He is a pure lyric tenor, with a carefully trained voice; pure, clear.

even and flexible, and naturally placed. His tones were always true and sympathetic, and his *mezza voce* was most effective. At the outset, in addition to his apparent physical suffering, he was palpably nervous, but Madame Tetrazzini came to his rescue by crossing the stage and giving him a gentle pat of encouragement."

The *New York Times* added: "He immediately became popular with the audience, and Madame Tetrazzini insisted on his sharing all her calls after the first act."

The *Record,* of December 8, 1909, also wrote humorously on the event: "That Tetrazzini fully realizes his exceptional ability and delights in singing with him is evidenced in the persistent manner in which she insists upon his assuming his burden of applause. Last night Tetrazzini literally dragged the hero forth."

John McCormack, Sammarco and I went on tour through America, singing at most of the big towns, under the management of Hammerstein. During that tour and subsequently many of the audience were completely deceived by my coughing while playing the part of the tubercular Violetta. Many went away from the opera house in the belief that I was actually ill, for they argued that no singer who had any thought of her voice would take such liberties with her throat and chest. Said the *Evening Mail*: "Tetrazzini insists upon an incessant cough, which degree of realism never fails to bring the sympathy of the audience; but this sympathy

is for the singer Tetrazzini, not for her tubercular Violetta."

"As usual, the singer accomplished all kinds of wonderful things with her voice," said the *Philadelphia Press.* "She took the high notes beautifully, and gave her trills and runs as easily as a bird. . . . She is able to make believe that she is French, that she is consumptive, and almost that she is thin, though obviously and to the naked eye she is none of these. But from the moment that she runs across the stage at her first appearance until she falls dead at the end she is always in the character."

The American newspapers, unlike the English Press, were not reluctant to comment upon my figure. Another Philadelphia newspaper thought it proper to describe my Violetta thus: "Of course, Tetrazzini did not die of a wasting consumption; but she entered into the pathetic spirit of the last act like an artist, and no heartless monster in the gallery dared call out, as they did for the original Violetta in Italy: 'Where is your consumption? I see only dropsy,' because the creator of Violetta happened to be very stout and forgot to go into training when she studied the rôle."

The secret of how I was able to look this part to perfection was discovered (so it professed) by the *Brooklyn Eagle,* which announced that "the diva was encased in what looked like a suit of armor, over which was a gown heavily weighted down with

spangles to such an extent as to make it somewhat difficult of manipulation."

The proportions of most public persons in America, I found to my surprise, are brazenly referred to in the public Press of the United States. I was never what the English people call thin-skinned, but I know of *prime donne,* as well as tenors and baritones, whose feelings have been deeply hurt by the candid references to their size, their height, or their want of it. I observed, at first almost with a shock, the irreverent remarks which the American newspapers used to make about their delightful President Taft, a man of ample proportions. It was not long after I had met the President that there appeared in the American newspapers articles with glaring headlines carried right across the page announcing that:

"TETRAZZINI LIKES TAFT
BECAUSE HE'S SO FAT"

Apparently in one of the interviews I had given to a newspaper representative I had, without thinking, admitted that he looked plump and jolly. Soon after that the following irreverent article appeared in the *New York Morning Telegraph*: "Tranquil people simply have to be fat. There is absolutely no getting away from it—it means flesh. This is said seriously, because it was spoken by one having authority, fleshly authority, and mental jurisdiction over such an obvious point as avoir-

dupois. Why argue? Why dispute? If peace of mind is a worthy attribute and a nice thing to have in one's social assets, then let lesser minds fuss with diets and weighing machines and obesity cures. On with the tissue and tranquility. That is all very good for a preface—now for a substantiation of the fatty charm of mind and manner.

"Madame Tetrazzini is talking of her latest discovery, President Taft. She doesn't want to think of anything but the days she spent in Washington.

" 'Mr. Taft is a *grande papa,*' said she. 'He is so tranquil, and, yes, he has a big pod—what you say, stomach? If he were nervous he would not be like that. He is successful, and he can be comfortable and fat. He has no nerves, so he just smiles, and shuts his eyes so, and he loves the music so, and he claps his hands so. Oh, he is a beautiful *grande papa*—one fine American. I never sang with so much joy before. I forgot Pittsburgh—my nose aches when I speak of it. I only saw him and sang to him, and he shook my two hands and was very happy. I am glad he is fat. It is a pleasure to sing to him."

"I am not," the writer coolly admits, "depending on my Italian for this eulogistic understanding of Mr. Taft. Madame Tetrazzini's interpreter—Miss Lathrop—helped a lot. I knew what the 'Oh's' and the 'So's' meant, and I never doubted, by the twitch she gave her nose, what Pittsburgh meant (the dust in the air of the great steel-producing city). In things of this sort, in which

is concerned the weights of men and women, it is wise, it is best, and, furthermore, it is necessary to be authentic. This refreshing view of the physical side of the Chief Executive was detailed to me at the big hired house of the Italian wonder-singer in West End Avenue."

When that article was read to me, I laughed outright, for what was lacking in accuracy was balanced by the writer's rich sense of humor. "But what will the President think when he sees this article?" I asked myself. The President saw the article and read it through, for it was copied by many other newspapers. The next time I saw the President he laughingly chided me for holding him up to public ridicule, but he admitted that he enjoyed the article as much as I did.

Newspaper references to the fact that I was not too slim were often made during my annual visits to the United States. I saw them on the occasion of my farewell tour in the winter of 1920-21. The *Evening Public Ledger,* of Philadelphia—this town is particularly interested in the size and avoirdupois of visiting *prime donne*—published a photograph of me, and boldly headed it:

"PLUMP AND PROUD OF IT"

Underneath was the following:

"Tetrazzini, of course. The great singer was photographed today in her suite at the Bellevue-Stratford, after she had uttered words of consola-

tion for stout women." Then came the following typical Americanisms in the form of headlines:

"SURE, TETRAZZINI IS FAT
DOESN'T CARE WHO KNOWS IT
FAMOUS SONG-BIRD SHOWS RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR PLUMP WOMEN TO TAKE—THEN HUMS 'HOW DRY I AM' "

"Now, listen, you ladies who wear out-sizes," the article began, "and be proud of your plumpness. 'Some people are born to be thin,' said the great Tetrazzini today, 'others to be fat. I belong to the latter class. And I'm not the least ashamed of it. Why should I be? But see! It is not fat after all.' Here the soprano showed an astounding forearm. She had not exaggerated. The finest athlete in the world would have been proud to own the muscle and sinew displayed. 'Hard as nails' was the only good description. Madame Tetrazzini began to inhale very slowly, standing erect with her head thrown back. The visitor was amazed at the wonderful chest expansion which Madame Tetrazzini so easily accomplished. Tetrazzini said she exercised every morning faithfully, and gave a sample of her getting-up exercises.

" 'I roll, too, all round the floor of my room,' she said, though this time she did not demonstrate. 'But outside, at the automobile or on the horse, I do not exercise. It would be bad for my voice; I would get overheated, and then catch cold. No, but indoors I do everything to keep myself in good con-

dition. I believe the cure for almost everything, great and small, almost every ill there is, is to breathe deep, from the bottom of the chest, like this.'

"Madame Tetrazzini is the living proof of the efficacy of her advice. She looks in the pink of condition, and she is very happy and full of spirits. 'But, oh, that prohibition!' "

I have many happy memories of President Taft other than the incident that I have already narrated. When I first visited Washington I was invited to the White House to see the big President. Rising from his seat, he shook hands and, smiling broadly, told me that he had heard me sing all the famous arias in my extensive repertoire. "And where have you heard me sing, Mr. President? Have you been attending my performances incognito?"

"Oh, no," he laughed. "Would that I had the time to do it. The explanation is much more simple. The White House has a magnificent talking machine, and I have added all your records."

During my stay in Washington the President organized a special gala performance, and invited all the ambassadors and foreign ministers and plenipotentiaries then in Washington to be present. It was an impressive evening. All the members of the diplomatic body, with the sole exception of the Italian Ambassador, were present. The President afterward apologized to me for the unavoidable absence of the representative of my own country.

When I first met the President he told me that his favorite song was the "Polonaise" from *Mignon,* and that he used to have it sung to him almost daily by the White House machine. The President was present nearly every night we were playing in Washington, and so I sang "Polonaise" on each occasion in his honor. One of the operas that we gave at Washington, as I have mentioned earlier in this book, was *The Daughter of the Regiment.*

What was happening in the political and musical world at Washington at that time was mentioned thus in the *Philadelphia Item*: "Madame Tetrazzini made a hit with President Taft yesterday when she told him she knew of his fondness for the brilliant 'Polonaise' from *Mignon.* She made a far greater hit last night, when, at the end of *The Daughter of the Regiment,* in the Belasco Theatre, she sang the 'Polonaise' for the President's special benefit. President Taft greeted her cordially and conversed with her for some time in Spanish. Near the end of the interview the prima donna asked in English: 'You come tonight?'

"'My dear woman,' the President is quoted as saying, 'a dozen Cabinet meetings would not keep me away.' After Madame Tetrazzini had promised to sing the 'Polonaise' for him that night, a telegram was sent to New York for the orchestral score, which arrived in time for the performance. After *The Daughter of the Regiment,* which marked Madame Tetrazzini's third appearance here this week, the prima donna again appeared

to sing the 'Polonaise.' The President and Mrs. Taft were plainly pleased when the orchestra played the opening strains, and the audience, which had not been let into the secret, enthusiastically applauded. Madame Tetrazzini sang delightfully, and one of the foreign diplomats said, 'I have never heard the "Polonaise" so well sung.' The President sent Madame Tetrazzini some beautiful flowers from the conservatories at the White House."

More of the newspapers turned their humorous journalists to writing up Taft and me. Here is an extract from the *New York Herald:*

"MUSIC HATH CHARMS
MADAME TETRAZZINI HAS BEEN SINGING FOR PRESIDENT TAFT
DELIGHTFUL WAY TO SMOTHER THE SHRIEKS OF THE INSURGENTS!"

A headline in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* announced

"TETRAZZINI LANDS TAFT
ENTRANCES THE PRESIDENT, WHO TELLS HER SHE SINGS LIKE AN ANGEL"

Underneath was a description which stated that "The President met her with both hands extended."

On the morning of my last day in Washington I called at the White House to say good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. Taft. To please the wife of the Presi-

dent, I sang a few songs. As I was leaving, the President, bluff and large-hearted as he was physically great, brought to me an autographed photograph of himself which he said was "in remembrance of 'Polonaise.' " At the last matinée there arrived on the stage a messenger in an imposing uniform, which the public immediately recognized as that of an emissary of the President. I could see by the effect on the audience that he represented someone of considerable importance. The messenger read publicly a message from the President thanking me and my company for our services.

The old, old story told of everyone who has shaken hands with a renowned personage—it has been told of persons who have shaken hands with me—was told of me following my shaking hands with President Taft. Some time after leaving Washington I found myself at St. Louis, where the *Post Dispatch* informed the natives that: "They say the singer has a superstition about one of her hands—the one President Taft shook. The superstition is that one should never wash that hand again. Tetrazzini's right hand looks all right, though she exchanged hands with Taft last April (nine months ago). 'Why, of course Tetrazzini washes both her hands,' said the hotel clerk. 'What would Tetrazzini do with a marble bathtub if she only washed one hand?' "

I have the greatest regard for ex-President Taft. He impressed me as being one of the great gentlemen of the world. I somehow always associate him

with that other bluff and popular ruler who was loved by all who knew him, the late King Edward VII. Taft was so chivalrous and lent so much dignity to his great office. I was amused at one thing he told me. "I have no children," said he, "or I should probably have named one of them Tetrazzini. All I have is a little dog, which I have christened with your surname." While he spoke, Taft's little four-legged Tetrazzini stood by wagging its tail.

The later American President, Mr. Woodrow Wilson, did not show such keen interest in my singing as his predecessor. I did not mind that, but I was very much offended at something he once wrote to the effect that he preferred the Chinese to the Italians. Despite that, I decided to invite both him and Mrs. Wilson to my concert in Paris at the time of the Peace Conference. Mr. Wilson wrote back regretting that as he had previously arranged to visit (I think) the battlefields on that date, he could not be present. But Mrs. Wilson came.

Of the thousands of interesting experiences through which I have gone during my early tours of America, I can remember but a few. The proprietor of the hotel at which I stayed at Buffalo was so eager to please me that when I commented on the smallness of one of the rooms allotted me, he immediately brought in carpenters and masons, and, taking down partitions, made several moderate-sized rooms into one suggestive of a ballroom!

One day I sang over the telephone to a little girl who was too ill to attend the opera. This incident caused a big stir. The American Press stated that the telephone girl heard of my intention, and she told a few other girls to "listen in," and that by the time I began a large audience was waiting at telephones all over New York to hear me sing the mad scene from *Lucia*. Just then there were more "engaged" wires than usual in New York, and these, said the Press, "remained engaged until the last of the trills, runs and pyrotechnical cadenzas had passed into memory."

But the *Kansas City Post,* instead of publishing this story, elected to be sceptical, and declared that "Madame Tetrazzini has a Press agent who deserves a severe calling down. He has taken liberties with a story that has been told the same way for twenty-five years and has been laid at the door of every great singer in the world. By slightly altering the tale—so as to make it appear new, perhaps—he has spoiled it. That isn't the way to tell a story. Nobody would sing that scene to a sick woman. Here is the way," says the dictatorial writer, "to tell it, the way it has always been told: 'A prominent society woman, a friend of Tetrazzini, got into a dispute with her friend as to the words of an old folk-song, a lullaby. She called up Madame, who graciously sang it into the 'phone from start to finish. At the same time a call came in notifying the telephone girl that her aunt was dying of a combination of lumbago and liver com-

plaint. She immediately plugged on the sick room with the singer's apartments at St. Regis. The dying woman, listening to the sweetest music she had ever heard. took a new grip on life.' The Press agent who tries to invent a new story takes his reputation in his hands. The old ones are the safest—and best."

CHAPTER XVII

ENVY, INGRATITUDE AND BLACKMAIL

THESE chronicles of "My Life of Song" would be incomplete if they contained only references to the gay scenes, the pleasant experiences, the public triumphs, the true friends. "If you possess something which no one else has got and which everyone would love to have—get ready for trouble." I have often thought of this sage proverb when the worst that there is in some of my fellow-creatures has stirred them to active hostility toward myself. If you are in the—I had almost written "happy"—position of being among the obscure inhabitants of the earth, you will have few or no enemies. But as sure as night follows day, as you rise out of your obscurity you will make enemies; and the higher that you climb, the bigger the circle who know you or your name, so the number of those who would do you some kind of injury, more or less grievous, will increase. I do not wish to write in a spirit of bitterness; I merely narrate a few facts from my own experience.

There are members of my own profession, some my own compatriots now living in Italy, who are so jealous of the pinnacle to which my voice has

carried me that they would, I know, secretly rejoice to learn of my downfall. What would most please these envious enemies would be to hear that my voice had gone. As everyone knows, the haunting dread at the back of the mind of every great singer is that one day he or she will awake to discover that his or her voice has fled—never to return. Those who have seen that remarkable play, *The Great Lover,* have had that sombre aspect of a famed singer's life revealed to them with dramatic emphasis, for in that play they see "the Great Lover," the adored tenor, collapse in his dressing-room when he finds that his voice has vanished, apparently for all time. His reign over the realm of song has suddenly ended. Another takes his place and his crown.

A malicious attempt to anticipate an event akin to this in my own life was made in 1920. I was then on my way home to Italy, having completed yet one more of my annual tours through the United States. The liner on which I was then a passenger was the *President Wilson.* We had reached mid-Atantic, where it was impossible for me to issue the contradiction which became necessary in view of what then happened. I was seated in my cabin when a friend hurried in with a copy of the wireless newspaper which was published every day on board the ship. In it was the following astounding message received that day by wireless from Paris:

"*Tetrazzini seriously ill in Paris. It is reported*

that she has lost her voice, and will not be able to sing again."

I felt both amazed and apprehensive when the contents of this bulletin was made known to me. I knew that what was being printed on my own liner was being printed on other liners and was appearing in the English and American newspapers. The damage that I might suffer from an announcement of this nature was incalculable. Within a few hours all who had ever heard the name Tetrazzini would be under the impression that I should never again be able to sing in public, and that if I did it would not be the old Tetrazzini voice that they would hear. And the person who inspired that damaging message? What was that person's object? Surely it must have been to crush Tetrazzini. If not, so to damage her name that she would never recover her popularity. I can imagine the inspirer of that libellous message chuckling and saying: "When that gets round the world the public will no longer wish to hear her sing. Tetrazzini's hour is over." To this day I do not know who was the person who actually inspired that cruel message. I can say, however, that I lost no time in trying to overtake and nullify the evil effects of the apparently malicious falsehood that had been circulated broadcast concerning me.

When the other passengers on the *President Wilson* read this message they also came to my room and inquired as to the meaning of it.

"Are you really Tetrazzini, or only her spirit?"

they asked. "If you are only her spirit, why are you here? Has the real Tetrazzini passed away in Paris?"

My answer was a practical one. "I don't know who the unfortunate lady is who is ill in Paris," I said; "but I do know that I can soon prove to you that the real Tetrazzini is on the *President Wilson.*" With that I sang them a few arias from my repertoire. When they had heard these they crowded round, and one said, "If spirits can all sing like you, we prefer spirits to human beings," and another laughingly added that, while I was the most red-blooded and human spirit that had ever existed, I nevertheless had a voice which might conceivably belong to a member of the Celestial choir.

It was because of this detrimental cablegram that I visited London in October, 1920, to give one concert, and only one, so that all London might know that I had not been ill and that my voice was unimpaired. The ten thousand Londoners who gathered in the Royal Albert Hall that Sunday afternoon soon demonstrated that I had disproved what had been said about me, and from what others wrote me and what was published in the newspapers I learned that England still regarded me as the same Tetrazzini who had won their hearts at Covent Garden in November, 1907.

On my most recent tour of America, during the winter of 1920-21, I was greeted in the same affectionate manner by crowds as great or greater than ever. So the steps that I took to counter this little

act of hostility were, on the whole, effective. Despite the satisfactory outcome of this incident, I felt very grieved and sad at the proof—only one of many—which it offered that there were persons in the world desirous of accomplishing my downfall and who would be secretly happy when they heard that it had taken place.

This was by no means the first time that persons attempted to benefit from me by an ingenious blackmailing scheme or by adopting some roguish practice. In America it became so common for persons to try to grossly defraud me that I found it necessary always to take two detectives with me when on tour. One of these detectives had a case requiring his careful investigation immediately after I had engaged his services. I was then staying in a hotel in New York. One day a postal messenger brought to my room a small package, very carefully secured and registered. I had to sign a form to say that I had received this package. When I opened it I found that it contained what appeared to be two beautiful diamonds. There was nothing else in the box, not even a letter to indicate the name of the sender. Some days later, however, I received a note from a person of whom I had never heard stating that if I wanted to buy these brilliants we could doubtless come to terms. I showed the letter to the waiter, who remembered a similar package arriving at another hotel at which he was once employed. "Excuse me, madame," he said, "but I think you ought to ask your detective to come and see these." With that he went to the

telephone and in a few minutes the detective was in my room. Taking up the brilliants, he stepped to the window and examined them very carefully.

"False," he exclaimed as he returned them to me. "Do not buy them; send them back. Then we will see what happens. It is an old game, signora, and a very clever one that someone is about to try on you."

I sent the brilliants back to the person from whom they came, and then I saw that my detective was right in his diagnosis of the situation. By return of post there arrived an amazing letter which stated that instead of sending back the real diamonds that had been sent to me, I had substituted for them stones which were false. The writer demanded $3,000 as the difference between the value of the real and the false. It was as the detective had suggested, a very clever attempt to rob me.

When the detective saw the letter he went to find the writer, who happened to be a milkman anxious to get rich quickly. This milkman, when he found that instead of dealing with me he had to deal with the police force, immediately changed his tone. Though I did not prosecute him, my detective gave him a bad fright and threatened that if any similar case occurred in New York in the future, he would come and arrest him. I think that had the effect of frightening him from the false diamond business for good and sending him back to his less dangerous occupation of selling milk.

Another incident somewhat similar followed one

of my visits to Philadelphia. An unknown composer sent me the manuscript of a piece of music which he claimed to have written. The letter which accompanied this composition stated that if I liked the work I could sing it if I chose; if not, I could throw the music away. As a public singer I am often receiving complimentary pieces of new music from unknown composers, and there was no sound reason for my doing other than was suggested in the letter. It was a very poor piece of music, and I first thought of throwing it away. But as I was about to do this I had a sudden feeling that I ought to keep both letter and music. Subsequently I felt very glad that I did so.

I heard nothing further about this matter until a long time afterward, when one of my many tours of the United States brought me back to Philadelphia. Then, as I was about to leave for the opera house, the telephone bell of my room rang, and I found myself speaking with a Philadelphia lawyer. This lawyer coolly demanded to know what I proposed to do with the piece of music which had been sent me over a year ago by a young man of that city. If I had not held up this piece of music—it was really worthless—this young man, said the lawyer, would have made a lot of money out of it. The attorney stated that his client now needed to be reimbursed for what he had lost through my dilatoriness, and if I did not pay him the sum he demanded, he would come armed with legal power

to collect it at the box-office where I was singing that night.

"All right; come by all means," was my answer. When the lawyer had rung off I sent for one of my detectives and explained what had happened. He intimated that he would be at the box-office that night in readiness for whoever chose to appear. That night, soon after the house had filled, there came to the box-office a rough-looking man who said that he had come at the request of Madame Tetrazzini. As he spoke my detective put his hand on his shoulder and demanded an explanation. "Tell me what you have against Madame Tetrazzini," he demanded.

At this the caller hesitated and mumbled something quite incoherent, and then tried to break away. But the detective held him tight. "You must state your case before you will be allowed to go," said the detective. Then the man said he had a friend who had written a great work and had sent it to Madame Tetrazzini for her to see. But Madame Tetrazzini, he said, having realized its great value, had retained it and had not made any payment for this inestimable privilege.

"Come along, then," said the detective, "and we will fetch your friend. And I am ready to pay him what is rightly his when we get him."

"Oh, no, no, no!" exclaimed this man. "I know you are a detective. I have been sent here by the man who washes plates at the hotel." Here he named a well-known Philadelphia hostelry. "I

MADAME TETRAZZINI AND THE GOVERNOR
OF CALIFORNIA

FAREWELL TO AMERICA

am not the man you think I am and seem to be wanting."

There is little reason to doubt that this man was the composer and the solicitor in one. The detective told him that Madame Tetrazzini still had the piece of music and the letter which accompanied it, and he could have both back if he chose to sign a receipt for them. But this caller did not wait. The detective had frightened him sufficiently, and he left in a great hurry. I still retain that piece of music and also the letter, and take both with me on every trip which I make to America and on every tour which embraces the town of Philadelphia. I took it with me on my farewell tour in 1920-21, but I have not since heard of the mysterious composer-plate-washer, and do not expect that he will ever approach me again. But it would save me a few unpleasant moments if I were not the recipient of such unsolicited gifts from these unknown persons.

All through my life of song I have been receiving by post strange things which I do not want and which I would gladly be spared the trouble of opening. When I was in Rome some time ago I received a long poem specially written to honor my name as a singer of renown. But the poem was written in such fervent, florid and dramatic language that instead of appealing to my love of poetic art it only made me laugh. I have kept it because it appeals to my sense of humor every time I glance at its flamboyant opening stanzas.

Many letters that I receive are from men and

women begging for money. When I was last in England I received a letter from an English colonel who bitterly complained that he was compelled, through straitened circumstances, to live in two rooms. Then he proceeded to argue that it was not fitting that a person who held such a high rank should be compelled to live in such mean and unpretentious style. Would I oblige him by sending him some of the large sums I earned with my voice to help him take a house which was worthy of occupation by a colonel in the British Army? I have no time to answer all the begging letters that I receive, but this cool request stirred me to write to this dignified gentleman, pointing out what he might have known if he had given the subject a moment's consideration, that unfortunately there were friends and acquaintances of mine who were in a worse plight than he and who had, therefore, a prior claim on my bounty.

Another remarkable begging letter was handed me when I was about to embark on the *Mauretania* in October, 1920. It was from an Englishman who wished to obtain £2,000 wherewith to buy a motor-bus which he proposed to drive through the streets of London and thereby earn a living for himself. I did not send him the £2,000 he sought.

Though I have paid several visits to Paris and sung there to great and enthusiastic audiences, I have few happy recollections of the French Press and the French Government. Their style of gratitude is very different from that of other nations.

This I particularly noted in March, 1919, when I responded gladly to an urgent request to sing in Paris to raise money to help the unfortunate children of Alsace-Lorraine. It was a very grand affair. Besides the Queen of Roumania, Mrs. Wilson, wife of the then American President, Marshals Foch and Joffre, there were present all the big people who had assembled in Paris for the Peace Conference. Though I had travelled all the way to Paris to oblige the French, I found there was manifested no great readiness to oblige me. I intimated to the organizers that in addition to the orchestral accompaniment I should like to have in the building a piano so that I could sing in English some popular Allied songs to please both British and American soldiers who would be present in force. The answer to this request was that there was no piano in the theatre, and the authorities, therefore, could not honor my request. *Not a piano in the theatre, indeed!* But there were pianos in Paris. It but needed the word from the person in authority and the building could have been choked with pianos in an hour. Yet I had spent out of my own pocket $5,000 in order to come there to raise money for this deserving French national charity. So busy were the French people in rearranging their own affairs that I could forgive their want of courtesy over the piano, their forgetfulness in the matter of flowers and thanks, but I cannot forgive them for the way they treated the journalists representing the newspapers of my

own country. For these Italian Pressmen, when they applied to come to my performance, were rudely informed that they could not be admitted, although the French Press had been invited. When my compatriots told me how the organizers of my concert had treated them I was most indignant. I could not refuse to sing, because the object of the performance was one of the most worthy for which I have ever freely given my services, and because I was expressly asked to do so by the Italian Ambassador in Paris. But I determined that my own compatriots should not be kept away from my concert. So I sent out and bought them tickets for the best seats in the house and spent over $2,000 to obtain them.

A few days later I gave a reception at the Grand Hotel in Paris, to which I invited, besides my friends and celebrities, all the English, American and Italian newspaper representatives. I omitted to send invitations to the French Press, as I wanted to teach this country, which is reputed to be so polite to strangers, not to mete out such invidious treatment to my compatriots. As that reception was in progress there entered the Italian Ambassador in Paris, who brought me a telegram he had just received from the Queen-Mother calling me back to Rome. I had to leave at once. But there was to be another annoyance before I left this country. To save me any unnecessary trouble on the way home, my Ambassador sent a telegram to the French frontier instructing the authorities there

that I must not be disturbed by the customs. This had no effect on the polite French people whom I had come all the way from Italy especially to help. When the train reached the frontier, in the middle of a cold night, I was awakened, bundled out of my sleeping compartment, and made to go through the stupid formalities of the passports. When I asked the authorities if they had received the message from my Ambasador, they admitted having received it, but coldly replied that there was no reason why I should be treated any differently from other persons. For which and other reasons I have not a high opinion of French courtesy and French gratitude.

When I arrived in Rome I went to the Foreign Office and preferred a personal complaint to our Foreign Minister, who immediately sent to Paris and protested against the scurvy treatment which I had received at the French side of the frontier. This protest must have been effectual, for several days later the French Ambassador in Rome called on me and offered me a gold medal in recognition of my services to his nation. But the French newspapers afterward announced that they had had a medal specially made in my honor, and I had refused to accept it. It will be a long time before I forget the courtesy of the French Government and the French Press.

Another instance of flagrant ingratitude is that of an artist who at the time when he was ill made a most pathetic appeal to me to help him. I paid

all his medical expenses and maintained him and his family during the long period of his illness. But I have yet to receive his letter of thanks for the interest I took in him and his.

I could quote numerous cases in which persons have obtained their ends through enlisting my aid, but who have completely forgotten the elementary phrase "I thank you." There come times when I feel that it is useless trying to help persons who are so selfish and ungrateful, but then I am comforted by reflection that it does not matter what their attitude is so long as I am conscious that I have acted rightly. To give here an account of the philanthropic side of my life is farthest from my intentions, nor, perhaps, would readers thank me if I were to narrate the number of times I have sung for charities, the work I have done for hospitals, for churches; or if I spoke of the poor folk in my native Florence and elsewhere who are supported by the earnings of my voice.

During the war I gladly gave myself to the great work of raising money sorely needed by the Italian Red Cross. At the time the use of private automobiles was prohibited by the Government, but in view of the work that I was doing, travelling all over Italy, singing everywhere to huge crowds, the Government gave me a special permit to use my own car. That historic night when Venice was bombarded from the air, I was in the city of beautiful waterways singing to a vast audience in one of the principal theatres. As I was singing we

could hear the noise of the raiding airplanes above us. Fortunately, no bombs were dropped in our vicinity, and before I left the Venetians were talking of me as their guardian angel.

I vividly remember the night when Trieste was taken by Italian troops. I was singing in the City of Flowers—my home town. At the end of one of my arias someone arrived on the platform and shouted, "Trieste is free!" Of course, such tremendous news set my Italian audience aflame. They rose in their seats and sang and danced and shouted for joy. I think that night was the only occasion on which I have ever sung in public that the performance has ended before my scheduled time. For this I was mainly responsible. Instead of proceeding with my next song, I said to the audience, "You are all too happy tonight to want to hear me. Let us all go out into the street and shout for joy at the great victory of our troops." This suggestion was met by an outburst of cheering. Then we all hurried forth to join the great crowds who were already jubilating in the gay streets of my native Florence. All the expenses of the concerts at which I sang I paid out of my own pocket, and the proceeds were handed over intact to the Red Cross.

After that great night at Florence I arranged a concert on a grand scale at Trieste, at which I had the support of the famous baritone, Titta Ruffo, and Mancinelli. The proceeds of this evening amounted to 400,000 crowns (nearly $100,000).

That night there was a great reception given by the admirals of the English, French and Italian warships which were then in Adriatic waters. One of the admirals—I will not give him away to his Government—said that he ought to be at Fiume that night, but, despite his Government, he proposed not to leave until after the concert. Nor did he. For my war work I was given a beautiful gold medal, of which there are only four in Italy. The other three are possessed by our beloved Queen-Mother, Queen Eleanor (our present Queen), and the Duchess of Aosta (Princess Helen of Orleans). I am very proud of this medal and deeply grateful that I was able to do something to help my country in her hour of dire need.

One incident which occurred in America in April, 1910, ought to be told here. When I was in Mexico, earning only $180 a performance, a man named Isadore Lerner came to me and offered me $500 a night to sing under his management. He was to meet me in Havana on February 25, 1904; but he was not there. Later, Mr. Leahy, the impresario from San Francisco, who has always treated me most fairly, came along and engaged me to sing at the Tivoli in San Francisco for the season 1904-5. That season was a great success, and one of the persons who soon realized this was my lost impresario, Lerner, who suddenly turned up with a suit for $24,000 for breach of contract. He did not persist in this suit, which I thought had fizzled out; but in April, 1910, this man Lerner

unexpectedly reappeared on my horizon when I was in New York. This time he had increased his claim to the colossal sum of $39,000. Now thoroughly alive to the fact that I must be the possessor of a considerable sum of money, he pressed his suit with all the legal force that he could command. As I was about to leave for England I heard that this precious impresario was endeavoring to serve on me attachments which should prevent me and my luggage leaving New York. As will be seen from the following headlines, clipped at random from a few New York newspapers of that time, this little plot of the disappearing and reappearing impresario did not succeed:

"TETRAZZINI LOCKED IN CABIN"
"FOOLS PROCESS SERVERS AT SAILING"
"TETRAZZINI HID ON 'MAURETANIA'"
"TETRAZZINI GETS ON 'MAURETANIA' SECRETLY AT NIGHT
AND LAUGHS OVER ESCAPE"
"TETRAZZINI IS ARTFUL DODGER"
"MADAME TETRAZZINI MAKES GETAWAY"
"OUTWITS PROCESS SERVERS"

And so on! I did not find it a very difficult matter to outwit this egregious impresario. Hearing from my lawyer that the process servers were everywhere waiting to serve me as I went aboard, I assumed a serviceable disguise and boarded the *Mauretania* by the luggage gang-plank. Once

safely aboard, I protected myself from the service by surrounding my stateroom with detectives, who remained there until the very last moment, when it was too late to keep me in the country.

The *New York American* published an amusing verse, headed "Opera Star's A-Sailing," which cleverly described this little incident. It ran:

"Tetrazzini made a getaway on yesterday's Cunard,
She beat the process servers by a nose;
She made the *Mauretania,* but she made it under guard,
And safe on board she chortled at her foes."

Not only did I get safely away from the clutches of that mercenary Lerner man, but I took away with me my trunks, my jewels, and all that I possessed.

CHAPTER XVIII

MY LOST FRIENDS

ONE of my most delightful experiences was the occasion of the visit to Rome of the bands of the Allied Forces in the spring of 1918. When I saw the bands of the English Guards, under Colonel Rogan, as well as the American, French and other bands, gathering in Rome, I thought that here was one opportunity to show my gratitude to England and America for the many honors and kindnesses I had received in those countries, so I gave a reception at the Grand Hotel in Rome.

There came to this reception the ministers representing the Allied nations, as well as many members of the Italian Parliament. The bandsmen came too, and, I was assured, enjoyed the afternoon without being subjected to any military restrictions and without being asked to play. We all spent a right jolly time together, singing the popular airs of each country—not, of course, forgetting *Over There.* I sang a number of songs to the accompaniment of popping champagne corks—for we have no dry laws yet in Italy. The bill for this festival came to 45,000 francs (nominally about $9,000), which, when compared with the obvious enjoyment

of all the bandsmen who had honored me by their presence, was passing cheap. When I last visited London, Colonel Rogan called on me at the Savoy Hotel and presented me with a photographic memento of the occasion, on which was written:

"A souvenir of the visit of the bands of the Brigade of Guards to Italy, and of the happy time spent by them as the guests of the 'Queen of Song' at the Grand Hotel, Rome."

There is one world-famous conductor under whose baton I have never yet sung. I have too great an admiration of his genius to publish his name at this moment without his permission. Perhaps one day I will see him again, and ask him to allow me to give his name. Let it suffice to say that he is not merely famous in his native Italy, but in North and South America, in England, and in most other countries. Here is the story of my tilts with this remarkable genius. Before Gatti-Casazza went to New York to take charge of the Metropolitan Opera House he was manager of the famous La Scala at Milan, at which my brother-in-law, Signor Campanini, was then the conductor. The time came for a musical festival at Ferrara, the town of the great tenor Massini, who was the Caruso of his day. (Massini, by the way, was the great hero of Caruso, who hung a picture of his illustrious forerunner in the most prominent position in his own home.) Gatti-Casazza heard me sing at this gala performance. At this time it had been arranged to produce the opera *The Magic*

Flute at the world-renowned Milan Opera House, and my brother-in-law said to Gatti-Casazza: "If you want it to be a success, take Tetrazzini as your soprano."

Gatti-Casazza shook his head. "Oh, no," he said, "she will not suit us. She is not a soprano legere. She is a soprano lyrico. I want a real coloratura."

My next encounter with Gatti-Casazza was the occasion when I was singing with the Boston Opera Company, at four gala performances. By that time Gatti-Casazza had changed his opinion about myself, for he sent me an urgent request to come to New York to sing with Caruso at six gala performances there. Nothing was ever farther from my thoughts than to cherish for any length of time ill-feeling toward any person. I wrote to Gatti-Casazza and agreed to his proposal. At that time the great *maestro* to whom I have referred (but not by name) was conducting at the Metropolitan. After all that had gone before, my decision to appear now at the Metropolitan caused a considerable stir, both in the theatre and outside. Members of the chorus gave me a great welcome. "Hurrah! Tetrazzini has come to us at last!" they shouted as I appeared for rehearsals.

Though the reception which the majority of my own profession gave me was most generous, I soon found that there was one person present who did not seem to take kindly to my advent. He was none other than the great *maestro*. His mental

attitude at that time was conveyed to me by a friend in the chorus, who whispered in my ear the news that the *maestro* had expressed himself as disliking the task of conducting for artists of the "skyrocket, pyrotechnic, or firework brand."

To appreciate this attitude it should be understood that during the singing of the long, unaccompanied cadenzas of the great arias the conductor has to stand, statue-like, with raised baton, waiting to take up the cue with the orchestra. I had always known that some of the superior conductors considered such a pose to be far beneath the dignity of persons so exalted as themselves, particularly when conducting for sopranos who occasionally add notes of their own to the original score. When I heard that this great *maestro* had so expressed himself concerning my singing, I went to Gatti-Casazza and asked:

"Who is the conductor this evening?"

"He is the *maestro* ——" replied he, naming the conductor who had called me a skyrocket singer.

"Oh, no," I answered. "I protest against singing to the accompaniment of his baton. Give me number two conductor."

Gatti-Casazza did not demur, for he had regretted opposing me on a previous occasion, and probably now felt that it was useless again to object.

The scene that night at the Metropolitan was so wonderful that even the management, accustomed as they were to great nights, expressed their amazement at the unusual spectacle. To say that the

theatre was crowded would not convey an adequate idea of the scene. All the wealthiest people in New York were there in force. They filled the boxes and the orchestra, and extra seats that were placed down the aisles. They overflowed into the corridors, where, without being able to see, they stood to listen. Special police had to be brought in to help the attendants in handling the mass of people that swarmed into the famous theatre. Occupying a box in that great audience was one man whose position that night was peculiar. He was the chief conductor, but he was not conducting. Yet he sat through the performance and, to his credit, joined heartily in the public applause. He went farther. After the performance was over he came behind the scenes, sought me out, and congratulated me upon my work and upon the size of the audience. "I have never seen such a house," he declared, speaking with much enthusiasm. Then, with a note of sadness in his voice, he exclaimed: "What a shame it is that I did not have the honor of conducting so remarkable a performance on this night of nights."

"But you did not want to conduct for me," I replied. "I understand you don't like my skyrockets."

For a moment he looked at me nonplussed, and I laughingly proceeded: "I know it is inconvenient for you to conduct for sopranos who have the habit of singing very long cadenzas. It makes you nervous to hold your hands in the air. And I am the

last person to want a *maestro* to conduct for me against his inclination."

The *maestro* took my raillery with great good humor and begged my pardon. We shook hands and parted friends, but he has not so far conducted for me. One of the reasons is that we have not been thrown together by fate, as when I am singing in one country he is usually in another.

Not long ago this great *maestro* came to Rome at the time I was resting at my palace there. He called on me and said: "Signora, I am very, very angry with you."

"For what reason, *maestro?*"

"Because you gave a concert in Milan recently without calling on me to conduct for you."

"I am so sorry, dear *maestro,*" I truthfully declared. "Believe me, it was not because I would not gladly have had you there as my conductor. I did not ask you because I was unwilling to hazard a refusal."

At this the *maestro* asked me to promise him that I would not close my career as a prima donna without first singing to his baton, and I gave him the promise—which I certainly intend to fulfill.

One reason why the illustrious *maestro* called on me at that time was to induce me to consider the name of a sculptor protégé for whom he wanted the task of designing the great mausoleum for the family Tetrazzini which, at a cost of $200,000, is to be built in Milan. It is within this

mausoleum that I wish to be buried with the other members of my family.

I have already stated that I am a member of the Roman Catholic Church. It was a source of great satisfaction to me to find myself in possession of sufficient money, as the result of one of my tours, to be able to come to the rescue of a Catholic church at Lugano. The church had been reduced to such financial straits that it had to be abandoned both by priest and congregation. That church, I am glad to reflect, is now thriving and doing useful work in the vicinity where it was once a derelict. In my beautiful home at Lugano I have my own little chapel. It contains an altar on which hang the photographs of my own dear father, mother and brother, as well as those of many other of my closest friends. Day and night, whether I am at home or away, a taper is always burning at the altar. In this way I keep alive the memory of those dear ones who have meant so much to me during my wandering but happy life of song.

I have always tried to make friends, and have never deserted a friend, although friends have sometimes deserted me. When I returned to London at the end of the war, I sought out many of my English friends of pre-war days, only to find, to my enduring grief, that many of them were no more. While my own quarters were being visited at all hours by persons who wished to see me in regard to my profession, I was frequently absent.

I wonder if those visitors had an idea where I was on those occasions? I think not! They probably imagined I was "doing" the beautiful West End shops or sitting in a box at a matinée. The truth was very different. I was busying myself seeking out the graves of my departed English friends. I think I must have visited all the churchyards and cemeteries in and around London during those first few days of my post-war return to London. When I found the last resting-place I laid an armful of white blooms on the grass beneath which they slept just to let them know that Tetrazzini had not forgotten them.

It has always been my custom to arrange for a special Mass for the souls of the departed at Lugano on November second of every year. Wherever I am on that day, I know this Mass is being said in the town of my adoption in Italy; and wherever I happen to be—it may be America, or England, or some other country—I rise early and go to the nearest church, and through the entire Mass for the souls of the departed. During that Mass I mention every one of my departed friends by name. In the afternoon of the same day I go to the local cemetery—Catholic or otherwise, it matters not which—taking with me masses of the choicest flowers I can procure. Then I seek out all the forgotten graves, and place on each a bunch of the blossoms I have brought. All the time I am doing this I am thinking of the friends I loved who have gone before me. After I have

reverently deposited the flowers on the deserted graves, I proceed to adjust the flower borders and clean the headstones until dusk. This practice may seem curious to some, but others who have friends and cherish their friendship will, I feel sure, readily understand. Perhaps one day a friend will show kindly attention to the burial place of Tetrazzini. And if I can see what is being done, I think I shall feel all the happier for this little exhibition of the truest love.

My fondness for animals, as well as my devotion to my friends, has often been commented upon in the Press. I have gone through many adventures, and even got into a number of scrapes with port authorities, in my desire to keep with me one of my particular pets. One strange favorite of mine caused considerable trouble on one occasion, and it was fortunate that the incident ended without someone's being seriously injured. It was at the conclusion of a South American tour. I had been offered as a pet a more or less tame leopard, which I had accepted and was about to take back with me to Italy. This leopard was in a cage, traveling on the top of a luggage cart which preceded my own carriage on the way to the boat. But the jolting of this cart opened the door of the cage, and the leopard, more surprised than pleased to be at liberty, bounded down the street, scattering the terrified pedestrians as he sped on. I called to my own driver to follow—which he did. My frightened pet, hearing my carriage clattering

after him and the shrieks of the women in the street, dived into a tailor's shop. The astonished tailor threw one glance at his fearsome new customer, and then, thinking he could obtain safety aloft, swarmed quickly up the little ladder which he was accustomed to use to reach his top shelves. But my leopard did not attempt to follow. He was more interested in preserving his own beautiful skin than in injuring the almost hysterical tailor. He found a dark corner underneath the counter, into which he entered, trembling and snarling. At that moment an armed policeman appeared, and from the doorway cautiously surveyed the interior of the shop. My carriage arriving at the same moment, I jumped out just in time to stop the policeman from shooting my beautiful pet leopard. This was a more difficult task than catching the escaped animal, and I had to hand over a goodly sum as a bribe before the officer of the law would consent to lower his aggressive weapon. The task of securing the leopard was quite easy. We built up barriers of rolls of cloth, and placing the cage near the runaway, we were soon able to induce him to return to his rightful home. After the animal had been removed and the ten-minute sensation had died away, all that was left for me to do was to pay the tailor's bill for the temporary use of his shop and rolls of cloth. As I had recovered my leopard alive, I cheerfully paid the tailor the very stiff charge he made for his hospitality. After

he had received my check, the tailor naively expressed the hope that next time I visited him I would bring a whole menagerie.

I had another exciting adventure when traveling to Havana. As my train was speeding through a forest region we ran into a great fire. Hoping to clear this fire zone, the driver, instead of stopping, put on speed. He was unlucky. The heat had so expanded the metals that in one place it was impossible for any train to keep the line. There came a violent jolting, followed by the rending of the woodwork of my carriage; then more heaving, and a final crash. It was my first railway accident. Feeling that the world had been turned upside down, I scrambled to my feet and led my company to escape through the window. Then, though severely shaken and bruised, we found plenty to do, for, though we had providentially escaped, many had been killed, including some of the negro porters, and others had been seriously injured. While we were busy helping the injured the brushwood near the line caught fire, and soon the train began to blaze. After the wounded had been freed and tended, I led my party in a successful effort to salvage our indispensable opera equipment. A hose pipe which was carried on the engine was used to direct hot water from the boilers on to the luggage van. Though the hot water did not greatly improve some of our equipment, it nevertheless saved it from a much worse fate, and when we were able to resume our perform-

ances we found that our scalded scenery was still serviceable.

As we knew that it would be some time before a rescue train could arrive, the passengers, including myself and company, trekked to an open space near by, to windward of the fire, and encamped for the night. There we made ourselves as comfortable as possible, but were very glad when, early next morning, a relief train came along and took us through to Havana. Though in America incidents of this nature are taken as a matter of course, I regard that railway adventure as one of the most unpleasant experiences of my life of song.

CHAPTER XIX

ADVICE TO YOUNG SINGERS—AU REVOIR

WHERE are the great singers who will take the place of Patti, Melba, Jenny Lind, Tietjens, and those other *prime donne* of the glorious past? Where am I to look for a successor to Tetrazzini?

For years I have been hoping and searching for even one who will step into my place when in (I hope) the distant future I retire. So far I have hoped and sought in vain. There are thousands of singers and musicians in the world today, as always. Some of these have a large following, their hundreds of admirers. They sing well and they play well. In their own countries they draw good audiences, and their performances are applauded without stint.

But they have all stopped short of being truly great. They are virtuosos, and not geniuses. They have the training without the highest natural gifts. Their reputations are national, and not international. Their names are famous in some parts of the earth, but in other parts they are almost unknown. Yet the names of the passing generation of world stars are known in every civilized home of the world.

Occasionally a new star appears in some corner of the globe. I hear the name mentioned, and I say to myself, "Has the new prima donna actually arrived?" I wait and wonder. And then I discover that the new star is not of the first magnitude.

There is no one who would welcome the appearance of a new international star more heartily and more readily than would I. To me great art is life. That I have been able to give pleasure to vast audiences in all parts of the world for many years through my gift of song is to me an unending joy. Yet I want to see more and more great stars appear to lighten this dull age.

When Patti hailed me as her successor, I said to myself, "Though I cannot show you, dear Patti, how greatly I value that message of yours, perhaps I shall be able one day to do the next best thing—I shall write similarly to someone who appears on my horizon, and so pass on the pleasure that Patti's message gave to me."

I have not yet sent that message, but I am still hoping that before I retire I shall meet and hear a new Patti, a new Jenny Lind, a new Tetrazzini.

When I was singing in Spain my hopes rose high. A young singer came to me and asked me to hear her voice. I listened and secretly exulted. "Yes, I have found her," I said to myself—"the new international prima donna. She is a genius."

Her voice climbed to the sky without effort. The timbre and quality, the easy, bird-like trills

were such as are only commanded by the great ones of the earth. But her notes were not quite developed; she could not produce all the volume and beauty of tone without more study, more hard work, long hours of training, of rigid application, of self-control—yes, of self-sacrifice.

Not suspecting her real thoughts, I told my young genius what she must do and continue to do if she would be truly great. Her answer left me sad and sorrowful.

"What!" she exclaimed. "You say I must start training over again? Are you aware, madame, that I am a great artist?"

What could I say in answer? Here was an undoubted genius, one with the possibilities of an international prima donna, but so self-opinionated and unwilling to be helped by someone qualified to assist that she took offence at hearing the truth. I bowed and said, "Oh, I beg your pardon for my presumption." And she went away.

She has, however, returned, and is now acting upon some advice I proffered her.

Though the dearth of great talent is partly due to the fact that there are some who will not undergo the rigorous training which is essential for any aspirant to the greatest honors in the realm of song, there is perhaps another and stronger reason. Even supposing there are God-given voices undiscovered, and only waiting to be trained, I am afraid we have no great *maestri* capable of giving the training. So many teachers are too

ready to deceive themselves and their pupils in their methods of training. Their mistakes are many and flagrant. They beguile mezzo-sopranos into the belief that they are coloraturas, and sometimes indeed are able to add a few notes at the top while taking them away from the bottom.

When the modern *maestro* does produce a singer, the opportunities that are offered her to develop are, unfortunately, very few and hopelessly inadequate. Prior to the war there were opera houses in the capitals and smaller towns of Europe where the budding prima donna could sing and develop her art. Today the opera houses of the world, and particularly those of Europe, are in a bad way. Nor are the future prospects in England or in the other countries of Europe at all rosy for the potential star. Ten years will probably elapse before the opera houses of the world return to their pre-war state and become what they were in the old days, nurseries for the new singers.

Perhaps by that time I shall have met my new star!

Another question I have often asked myself and been asked by others is: What of the future of coloratura music, the music of runs and trills and melody, through which I have become known to the world? This music is no longer being written, singers no longer study it—yet people crowd to hear it. We are told that it is of the past, that it is dying or dead. The critics and the people

that go to opera talk of the modern music of France, Germany and Italy. But I do not believe this older style of music will die. No, it cannot die. For is it not natural music, the music of the birds?

And do the admirers of the very modern music really know how great is this old Italian music? It is not a matter of the frills and trills—these things are easy to write, and they do not make music; they are but the froth on the champagne. It takes a great master to write this music, though it seems so simple in comparison with the modern operatic compositions. The composers of this old school—Donizetti and Rossini, for instance—wrote especially for the voice as for an instrument; but Richard Strauss certainly did not write for the voice. The day will come, however, when there will be born another Donizetti. Then coloratura music will take a new lease of life. It may be that one or two great coloratura singers may first arise so as to inspire the new Donizetti. Yet he will come, and the world will assuredly welcome his advent.

Today the young students of singing whose voices seem to come in the coloratura class try to turn them into some other. Unfortunately, the majority of such voices are very small in compass, and do not therefore promise a great career. Perhaps that is another reason why there are now practically no students of this style of singing. It is true that the vocal art must be perfect for such music. What I mean is that the defects of

a coloratura are more readily apparent; they are not covered, as in the modern opera, with the sound of the orchestra. To one who has mastered high soprano technique, other music is not difficult. Coloratura practice is a kind of gymnastic exercise which keeps the voice flexible and in perfect working condition.

Some people will say that it takes years of study to become a great coloratura artist. Possibly with some, but with others it may not be necessary. A voice may be born just right or it may be developed just right. In any case, to have a perfect coloratura voice is to possess the choicest gift of the gods. Therefore, if it means arduous effort, the achievement is always worth while.

One objection now made to coloratura music is that it is not dramatic, that it is artificial, that the world now demands in its opera the thing that is like life. I cannot deny that such music is not dramatic in its character. One might say, perhaps, that it has light, but no shadow. Yet the melody that reaches the heart can exist in the same opera with dramatic music. Indeed, this is the case in the early Verdi operas. Perhaps the coloratura music of the future will be differently combined and used. I am no prophet—indeed, can anyone foresee in these matters? But I will say that this music will return to popularity as surely as springtime and its chorus of singing-birds must follow every melancholy winter.

Many of my correspondents write to ask me to

give them some hints as to how to become a famous singer. One day I may write a book on this subject. In this "My Life of Song" I have no space to give more than a few hints. I counsel every singer to lose herself in her part, as I invariably do when singing. I am the joyous girl in a pretty garden in far-away Italy; I am a daughter of Greece, wandering, pensive, in the shade of a noble temple; or I am the wild-hearted French maiden sorrowing for my ungrateful lover. Whatever rôle I am singing, I actually become that person. Even then one must temper feeling with reason. Sometimes, when the dramatic situation demands sadness, I forget myself to such an extent that sobs choke my throat, tears fill my eyes, and my voice breaks. The singer must never let herself go so far. When this happens I have to take hold of myself suddenly. "No, Tetrazzini," I say; "what are you doing?" Then my voice clears, and I am the character again, but the character under the control of Tetrazzini.

In studying a new rôle I am in the habit of practising in front of a mirror in order to get an idea of the effect of a facial expression and to see that it does not take away from the correct position of the mouth.

When singing, always smile slightly. This little smile at once relaxes the lips, allowing them free play for the words which they and the tongue must form. It also gives the singer a slight sensation of uplift necessary for singing. It is impossible to

sing well when mentally depressed or even physically indisposed. Unless one has complete control over the entire vocal apparatus, and unless one can assume a smile one does not feel, the voice will lack some of its resonant quality, particularly in the upper notes. Be careful not to simulate too broad a smile. Too wide a smile often accompanies what is called "the white voice." This is a voice production where a head resonance alone is employed, without sufficient of the appoggio or enough of the mouth resonance to give the tone a vital quality. This "white voice" should be thoroughly understood, and is one of the many shades of tone a singer can use at times, just as the impressionist uses various unusual colors to produce certain atmospheric effects. For instance, in the mad scene in *Lucia,* the use of the "white voice" suggests the babbling of the mad woman, as the same voice in the last act of *Traviata* or in the last act of *La Bohême* suggests utter physical exhaustion and the approach of death. An entire voice production on this colorless line, however, would always lack the brilliancy and the vitality which inspires enthusiasm. One of the compensations of the "white voice" singer is the fact that she usually possesses a perfect diction.

The singer's expression must concern itself chiefly with the play of emotion around the eyes, eyebrows and forehead. The average person has no idea how much expression can be conveyed by the eyebrows and eyelids. A complete emotional

scale can be symbolized thereby. A very drooping eyebrow is expressive of fatigue, either physical or mental. This lowered eyebrow is the aspect we see about us most of the time, particularly on people past their first youth. As it shows a lack of interest, it is not a favorite expression of actors, and is only employed where the rôle makes it necessary. Increasing anxiety is depicted by slanting the eyebrows obliquely in a downward line toward the nose. Concentrated attention draws the eyebrows together over the bridge of the nose, while furtiveness widens the space again without elevating the eyebrows. In the eyebrows alone you can depict mockery, every stage of anxiety or pain, astonishment, ecstacy, terror, suffering, fury and admiration, besides all the subtle tones between. That is one reason why it is necessary to practise before the mirror—to see that the correct facial expression is present, that the face is not contorted by lines of suffering or by lines of mirth.

Another thing the young singer must not forget in making her initial bow before the public is the question of dress. When singing on the platform or stage, dress as well as you can. Whenever you face the public, have at least the assurance that you are looking your very best; that your gowns hang well, fit perfectly, and are of a becoming color. It is not necessary that they should be gorgeous or expensive, but let them always be suitable; and for big cities let them be just as sump-

tuous as you can afford. At morning concerts in New York, velvets and hand-painted chiffons are considered good form, while in the afternoon handsome silk or satin frocks of a very light color are worn, with hats. If the singer chooses to wear a hat, let her be sure that its shape will not interfere with her voice. A very large hat, for instance, with a wide brim that comes down over the face, acts as a sort of blanket to the voice, eating up sound and detracting from the beauty of tone which should go forth into the audience. It is also likely to screen the singer's features too much and hide her from view of those sitting in the balconies and galleries.

One word on the subject of corsets. There is no reason in the world why a singer should not wear corsets, and if singers have a tendency to grow stout, a corset is usually a necessity. A singer's corset should be well fitted around the hips and should be extremely loose over the diaphragm. If made in this way it will not interfere in the slightest degree with the breathing.

Though every singer must take care of her health, she need not necessarily wrap herself in cotton-wool and lead a sequestered existence. At the same time, one cannot retain a position of eminence in the domain of song and also indulge in social dissipations. Society must be cut out of the life of the great singer, for the demands made by it on time and vitality can only be given at a sacrifice to her art.

The care of the health is an individual matter; what agrees well with one might cause trouble to others. I eat the plainest food always, and naturally, being Italian, I prefer the foods of my native land. But simple French or German cookery agrees with me quite as well; and I allow the tempting pastry, the rich and over-spiced patty, to pass by untouched, consoling myself with fruit and fresh vegetables.

Personally, I never wear a collar, and have hardened my throat to a considerable extent by always wearing slightly cut-out gowns in the house; and even when I wear furs I do not have them closely drawn around my neck. Fresh air has been my most potent remedy at all times when I have been indisposed.

The foregoing hints may prove helpful to some of my readers, but they must not regard them as more than hints, for this is not a book on "how to sing," but a summary of the life of a singer.

In saying *au revoir* to my readers, I would also point out that I have no present intention of bringing my career to an early close. Far from it. My voice today has only just attained complete maturity. I hope to use it for the enjoyment of my fellow-creatures for many years to come. True, I have just completed my farewell tour of the United States of America; but that is only because America is so far away from my beloved Italy, and I can only reach it after an invariably unpleasant sea voyage. I shall still visit England,

which I love so well, every year. And I trust my voice will be heard there and in other capitals of Europe for many a year to come; perhaps in America once more.

I do not close this narrative on the sad note of farewell, for I am expecting often to meet every one of my readers in what, I trust, will be the happy future for us all. It may be that our meeting will be in some grand hall of song in London or in Brighton, in Liverpool or in Edinburgh, in New York, or in Paris or in Rome. No matter where it be, I shall certainly see you all again and again. You will hear my voice and clap your hands with joy, as you have so often done during those many pleasant hours of the years that have gone. And I, too, shall hear your voice—the stirring music of a delighted throng—and I, too, shall clap my hands and rejoice, as I have so often done during my glorious life of song.

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